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SKYWARD™

SKYWARD

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INTRODUCTION

SKYWARD is the kind of sci-fi concept that writers everywhere dream about. In fact, I'm quite sure that there was a collective scream of jealousy and frustration when writers everywhere read issue one of SKYWARD.

We're all of us constantly searching for that "perfect high concept idea" on which we can build something lasting and powerful. Something that is beautiful and terrifying, moving and important.

But the real truth is that while writers will never stop searching for the perfect "never-seen-before-high-concept idea" (don't even try to stop us) we all know in our deepest most honest places that what makes something powerful is all in the execution. The concept won't save you.

The beauty of SKYWARD is not the cool concept but the emotional journey, the way that we connect to Willa and her world. How invested we become in Willa and all the ways in which she introduces us to not just her world, but her righteousness, her hopes and dreams, her ability to never give up in the face of impossible odds. Willa is at once both wholly unique as a character and also like any other great fictional heroine, striving to do what's right, striving to make the world better than how she found it.

And that's what most fiction tries to do as well – make the world a better place – especially in comics – the medium of superheroes. If it sounds silly to think of reading comics as something that can change the world and make it better, just take a moment to think about the stories that have moved you, inspired you, *changed* you. There are more than you realize.

SKYWARD is ambitious and beautiful, wholly formed, complex, and more than ready to welcome you in and change you.

You should let it, I did.

Kelly Thompson
Portland, Oregon
November 2020

CHAPTER ONE

SLEEP TIGHT, WILLA.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DO IT. SHE JUST SCREAMS WHEN I PUT HER DOWN.

THAT'S BECAUSE SHE LOVES HER MOMMY AND DOESN'T WANT HER TO LEAVE.

I DON'T BLAME HER.

SHE'LL BE DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL SOON ENOUGH.

I KNOW, LILLY.

I JUST NEED TO WAIT UNTIL SHE'S OLD ENOUGH TO BRIBE.

POURED YOU A FRESH CUP OF COFFEE. I ALSO POISONED THAT GROSS CEREAL YOU LOVE.

WORTH THE RISK.

Lucky Charms

DAMMIT.

THAT WAS MY FAVORITE--

--MUG.

WHOA.

IT'S HAPPENING.

NO ONE BELIEVED ME BUT...

I WAS RIGHT.

OW!

COFFEE'S STILL HOT EVEN IF IT'S IN...

LOW GRAVITY...

OH NO.

LILLY.

DAMMIT!

FOCUS, NATE! ANGLE YOURSELF TO THE DOOR...

...AND MAKE SURE LILLY'S...

...OKAY...

LILLY!

NATE! WHAT'S HAPPENING?! THIS--THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!

JUST STAY THERE! I'LL COME TO YOU!

I--I THINK I CAN MAKE IT!

LILLY, DON'T--

LILLY!

I'M COMING FOR YOU--

WAAAAAAAA--

OH GOD.

OH GOD.
OH GOD.

OH NO.

DADADADADA.

WILLA...

TWENTY YEARS LATER.

MORNING, JOAN!

WILLA! CHECK THIS OUT.

I FOUND IT WHEN I WAS LEAVING WORK.

ISN'T IT HILARIOUS? I WONDER WHAT IT MEANS.

SO WEIRD.

CROSSING AHEAD

HI EDISON.

YOU'RE OLDER THAN ME, RIGHT?

NOT SUPER OLDER. YOU'RE NOT *OLD*, I MEAN. BUT YOU'RE OLD*ER* THAN ME. RIGHT?

YEAH. WHY?

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT THE WORLD WAS LIKE WITH GRAVITY?

I DO.

HOW WAS IT? DID PEOPLE HATE NOT BEING ABLE TO FLY?

I THINK I WOULD HAVE GONE CRAZY. NOT BEING ABLE TO GO *UP*?

WHAT WAS WALKING LIKE?

I CAN'T ANSWER THAT ONE.

OH GOD. I'M SORRY. I FORGOT ABOUT YOUR LEGS--

THUNK

"LIKE" ME? YOU MEAN SOMEONE WITHOUT LEGS?

I DIDN'T MEAN--IT'S NOT--

TELL SHIRLEY I'LL BE BACK LATER.

IT'S OKAY. BEING OUTSIDE THE CITY...IT CAN BE SCARY.

I'M NOT SCARED.

I WASN'T TRYING TO SAY--

WHY WOULD YOU THINK I'M SCARED?

I DIDN'T--

A GUY LIKE YOU CAN HANDLE IT, BUT A GIRL CAN'T?

ARE YOU GOING ON THE SUPPLY RUN TO LOS ANGELES NEXT WEEK?

NO. I CAN'T. I HAVE TO STAY HERE.

DON'T BE SORRY.

G-DAY'S THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME.

THAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF HOW YOU FLIRT, WILLA. THE LITERAL OPPOSITE.

WAS EDISON JUST HERE?

NOPE. HE WASN'T.

AND I DIDN'T JUST HUMILIATE MYSELF EITHER.

I HAVE A RUSH ORDER. DELIVERY GOT TO US LATE, THEY NEED IT ASAP.

I'LL TAKE IT.

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.

VERY. IMPORTANT.

I KNOW WHAT IT IS.

DAD SAYS HI.

HE... DOES? HOW IS HE?

OH, YOU KNOW. SAME OLD DAD.

WELL TELL HIM I HOPE HE COMES BY SOMETIME.

I DON'T SEE THAT HAPPENING ANYTIME SOON.

YOU CAN STOP RIGHT THERE.

GIVE ME THE PACKAGE.

YOU DON'T WANT WHAT'S IN HERE.

I KINDA THINK WE DO.

YOU KNOW, NORMALLY, I'D GIVE IT TO YOU. BECAUSE I'M GENEROUS LIKE THAT.

BUT MY JOB'S ON THE LINE HERE. SO GET OUT OF MY WAY BEFORE I HURT ONE OF YOU.

SORRY, FORGOT TO SAY PLEASE.

YOU'RE BLUFFING.

NO ONE USES GUNS ANYMORE. ALL IT'LL DO IS SEND YOU FLYING.

THAT'S THE IDEA.

BITCH YOU'RE NOT THAT CRAZY--

I'M NOT GOING AFTER HER.

STAY CALM STAY CALM JUST GRAB ON TO SOMETHING YOU'RE FINE--

--SO CLOSE--

--COME ON--

GOT IT! YES!

Oh.

WOW.

IT'S BEAUTIFUL.

THIS IS GONNA HURT.

BANG

UNGH!

NOT BROKEN. =WHEW=

AND PRETTY GOOD AIM IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.

FASTEST DELIVERY IN TOWN.

YOU'RE WELCOME.

WELL, FUN'S OVER. NOW FOR THE WORST PART OF THE DAY...

"...GOING HOME."

GROSS.

I THINK I BREATHED IN SOME OF YOUR SWEAT. YOU PROMISED YOU'D CLEAN UP AFTER YOURSELF.

DAD...

I'VE BEEN THINKING. WE'VE LIVED IN CHICAGO OUR ENTIRE LIFE.

HELL, WE'VE LIVED IN THIS APARTMENT SINCE RIGHT AFTER I WAS BORN.

THERE'S SO MUCH WORLD OUT THERE. SO MUCH I HAVEN'T SEEN. I WANT TO GO.

BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO.

I WANT TO LEAVE THE CITY.

I WANT TO SEE THE WORLD. TRAVEL AROUND. MEET NEW PEOPLE, EAT DIFFERENT FOOD, AND I CAN'T BECAUSE--

THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.

NO IT'S NOT, DAD.

WELL, OKAY, IT TOTALLY IS. I KNOW YOU NEED MY HELP TO PAY THE BILLS BECAUSE OF YOUR... SITUATION.

WHAT? NO. THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.

OF COURSE NOT. THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO THOUGHTFUL OF YOU.

WILLA...THE WORLD ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE THIS WAY. AND YOU...

YOU ***SHOULD*** BE ABLE TO TRAVEL THE WORLD.

GOOD. OKAY. GLAD WE'RE ON THE SAME PAGE--

BUT IT'S TOO DANGEROUS NOW. YOU CAN'T GO.

THE SKY *KILLS,* WILLA. ONE WRONG STEP MEANS DEATH.

I NEVER SHOULD'VE LET YOU OUT OF THIS APARTMENT.

GOD KNOWS YOU *TRIED* TO KEEP ME LOCKED UP IN HERE.

BUT I'VE BEEN LIVING OUT THERE SINCE I WAS FIVE! I CAN HANDLE IT!

THE ENTIRE WORLD IS UPSIDE DOWN!

GREAT, DAD! TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW!

I KNOW HOW TO FIX IT.

END CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER TWO

"I WORKED ON A PROJECT THAT STUDIED THE GRAVITATIONAL FIELD AROUND THE PLANET.

"WE HAD DISCOVERED TINY ANOMALIES IN THE EARTH'S GRAVITY.

"WE THOUGHT WE WERE ONTO SOMETHING EXCITING. SOMETHING THAT COULD OPEN UP NEW STUDIES IN THE FIELD.

"IF WE WERE LUCKY, WE WOULD GET OUR NAMES IN A *POPSCI* ARTICLE.

"WE NEVER EXPECTED TO DISCOVER THAT EVERYTHING WE KNEW ABOUT GRAVITY WAS WRONG.

"FEW PEOPLE BELIEVED US. I'M SURPRISED ANYONE DID, REALLY. GRAVITY'S ONE OF LIFE'S GREATEST CONSTANTS.

"WHAT GOES UP...

"...MUST COME DOWN."

BUT YOU CAN FIX IT.

YOU COULD SAVE THE WORLD.

I THINK SO. YES.

HERE, LET ME SHOW YOU--

WILLA, THAT'S NOT FAIR.

WAIT. I JUST REALIZED. THERE'S JUST ONE BIG PROBLEM.

WHAT?

YOU'RE TOTALLY CRAZY.

THINK SO?

CLOSE THE DOOR!

WHAT HAPPENED TO SAVING THE WORLD?

WILLA... PLEASE...

EVEN IF THERE WERE A MIRACLE CURE FOR THE WORLD--WHICH THERE IS NOT--I THINK YOU HAVE BIGGER PROBLEMS TO DEAL WITH.

LIKE THE FACT THAT YOU HAVEN'T LEFT THIS APARTMENT IN TWENTY YEARS.

SO MAYBE FOCUS ON STEPPING OUT THIS DOOR FIRST. THEN PAYING THE RENT.

THEN YOU CAN SAVE THE WORLD.

I'M NEVER GETTING OUT OF CHICAGO.

WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO LEAVE? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT IT'S LIKE OUTSIDE THE CITY?

I DON'T. THAT'S THE ENTIRE POINT. I WANT TO GO ON A SUPPLY RUN. SEE L.A. OR NEW YORK.

OR ANYWHERE OTHER THAN HERE.

I WASN'T IN THE CITY ON G-DAY, YOU KNOW.

YOU WEREN'T?

NOPE. I HAD TO MAKE MY WAY HERE. ONE HUNDRED MILES OF FLAT GROUND. LOST A LOT OF PEOPLE.

SO MANY JUST FLOATED UP AND NEVER STOPPED.

BUT WE KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THE GRAVITY NOW. AND WE HAVE GEAR.

I'M JUST SAYING...YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR DAD WENT THROUGH. WHAT WE ALL WENT THROUGH.

BUT THAT'S EXACTLY IT! YOU ALL WENT THROUGH IT!

AND YOU DIDN'T HIDE IN YOUR APARTMENT.

INSTEAD, YOU HELPED RAISE ME WHEN MY DAD SHOULD'VE.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE PROCESS IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

I MEAN, LOOK AT ROGER.

WAIT, YOU'RE ON A FIRST-NAME BASIS WITH ROGER BARROW?

USED TO BE. SAME AS YOUR DAD. THEY WORKED TOGETHER.

DAD'S NEVER MENTIONED HIM BEFORE.

CNL

ROGER BARROW LIVE

THEY BOTH KNEW G-DAY WAS COMING. WE ALL THOUGHT THEY WERE CRAZY.

YOUR DAD TRIED TO PREVENT IT FROM HAPPENING.

ROGER... HE DECIDED TO MAKE A FORTUNE OFF OF IT.

IF THEY WERE THAT CLOSE...

MAYBE HE CAN HELP ME DEAL WITH DAD.

HE HASN'T HELPED ANYONE OTHER THAN HIMSELF IN A LONG TIME.

EDISON, HELP ME TALK SOME SENSE INTO WILLA.

SHE WANTS TO GO TO THE STREETS AND SEE ROGER BARROW.

I'M STAYING OUT OF IT.

BARROW'S GOING TO BE AT AN UNVEILING TONIGHT. I'LL BLEND RIGHT IN, CINDERELLA-STYLE.

HEY, I'M SORRY ABOUT BEFORE.

IT'S OKAY.

NO. IT ISN'T.

THANKS.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO THE STREETS?

OF COURSE.

WHAT'RE THE STREETS LIKE?

I'M NOT AN EXPERT. I JUST CLEAN SOME OF THEIR DAMN HOUSES.

"DO YOU KNOW THE STORY ABOUT THE JAPANESE SOLDIER WHO DIDN'T KNOW WORLD WAR II ENDED?

"HE KEPT FIGHTING FOR TWENTY-NINE YEARS ON A REMOTE ISLAND. PEOPLE TRIED TO TELL HIM THE WAR WAS OVER.

"BUT HE WAS UNWILLING TO BELIEVE IT. UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THAT THE WORLD HAD CHANGED.

"THAT MAKES YOU AN EXPERT COMPARED TO ME. I'VE NEVER BEEN THERE."

"IT'S...WEIRD DOWN THERE."

"WEIRD, HOW?"

"IT'S LIKE THAT.

"AN ENTIRE CITY IN DENIAL."

MAG NET IZE

NO FLOAT

NO FLY ZONE

DRIVE STICTION

CHICAGO

BEST PASTE TASTE

MAG-BOOTS MAG-BOOTS

MOVE DOWN

BARROW

YOU ON THE LIST?

NO. BUT MY DAD IS OLD FRIENDS WITH ROGER BARROW.

I JUST NEED A MOMENT OF HIS TIME.

YOU'RE NOT LETTING ME IN, ARE YOU?

IS THAT A GUN?

YEAH. SO?

WE HAVE A SITUATION AT THE NORTH DOORS. ARMED INTRUDER.

THERE'S NO SITUATION AND NO INTRUDING.

I JUST CARRY A GUN IN CASE I END UP SKYWARD. SAFETY PRECAUTION.

I KNOW, IT'S A LITTLE OVERKILL, BUT BEATS THE ALTERNATIVE. AM I RIGHT?

YOU HAVEN'T EVER LEFT THE GROUND, HAVE YOU?

DO YOU SLEEP WITH THOSE GRAV-BOOTS ON?

I'M GOING TO LEAVE.

YOU NEED TO COME TO THE POLICE STATION.

I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING!

STOP STRUGGLING. I'M NOT GOING TO LET GO.

YEAH?

AAAH!

SOMEONE GRAB ON TO ME!

OH GOD I'M GOING TO FLOAT AWAY!

AW, IS EVERYONE AFRAID OF THE SCARY SKY?

JETPACKS?!

WELL THAT'S UNFAIR.

CAN WE SWAP GEAR?

YES? NO?

I'LL TAKE YOUR GRIM SILENCE AS A MAYBE.

OKAY--

THANKS.
REALLY? I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO GET A "I DIDN'T NEED YOUR HELP" SPEECH.

CLEARLY THAT ISN'T THE CASE.
STUPID. SO STUPID.

I ACTUALLY THOUGHT IT WAS PRETTY COOL.
ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU TASERED THE GUY'S MAG-SHOE.

REALLY?

I MEAN, DID YOU SEE THE LOOK ON HIS FACE?

THE SKY! THE SKY IS GOING TO EAT ME! *AAAAH!*

THAT WAS PRETTY FUNNY.

WAIT, WHY'D YOU FOLLOW ME?

BECAUSE IF YOU'RE GOING TO BLEND IN, YOU'RE GOING TO NEED THESE.

HOW DID YOU GET THEM?

THEY MUST HAVE COST A FORTUNE. AND...

AND I DON'T NEED THEM?

IT'S TRUE. I DON'T. SO THEY'RE YOURS NOW.

SERIOUSLY?

AND YOU SHOULD PROBABLY GIVE ME THE GUN. IT'S WEIRD ENOUGH TO WEAR ONE WHERE WE COME FROM.

HAVE FUN AT THE BALL, CINDERELLA.

HOW DO YOU EVEN USE THESE THINGS?

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SLEEPING IN YOUR GRAV-BOOTS?

--SNUCK OUT THE DOOR RIGHT ABOVE HER HUSBAND!

HA! SOME PEOPLE STILL DON'T THINK TO LOOK UP.

A DOME AROUND THE CITY? COME ON. EVERY YEAR THEY CAMPAIGN ON IT, BUT--

I NEVER TRAVEL ABOVE THE SECOND FLOOR. CAN YOU IMAGINE?

--AND A RAT FLOATED RIGHT PAST US! NEVER EATING THERE AGAIN--

--A MAGNETIZED HEM KEEPS THE DRESS DOWN. ***EVERYONE*** WILL BE WEARING THEM NEXT YEAR, TRUST ME.

HEARD SOME CRAZY UPPER WAS TRYING TO GET IN. THREATENED TO SHOOT EVERYONE.

I HEAR THEY JUST PEE UP AT THE SKY. USE IT AS A GIANT TOILET.

HA! COME ON. THAT'S GROSS.

WHERE ELSE WOULD YOU GO--

THERE YOU ARE.

EXCUSE ME. MR. BARROW?

I'M SORRY, MR. BARROW'S VERY BUSY RIGHT NOW. CAN I HELP YOU?

YEAH. YOU CAN STEP OUT OF MY WAY. HE KNOWS MY FATHER.

HE KNOWS A LOT OF PEOPLE'S FATHERS. WHAT'S HIS NAME?

NATHAN FOWLER.

I'M AFRAID I DON'T RECOGNIZE IT. IF YOU DON'T MIND--

MY FATHER IS NATHAN FOWLER!

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

MY FATHER.

HIS NAME IS NATHAN FOWLER.

IS? YOU MEAN...NATE'S ALIVE?

HE IS. YEAH.

I...I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. HE'S ALIVE! THANK GOD!

I THOUGHT, AFTER ALL THIS TIME...

YOU NEED TO TELL ME EVERYTHING.

WHAT HAS HE TOLD YOU ABOUT WHEN WE WORKED TOGETHER? DID HE TELL YOU ABOUT THE SHAVING CREAM INCIDENT? HE DID, DIDN'T HE?

WELL--

SIR.

YOU'RE SCHEDULED TO TALK TO THE MAYOR IN TWO MINUTES--

GIVE ME A SECOND TO TAKE CARE OF THIS. THEN I'LL BE BACK. DON'T GO ANYWHERE.

NATE FOWLER. I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

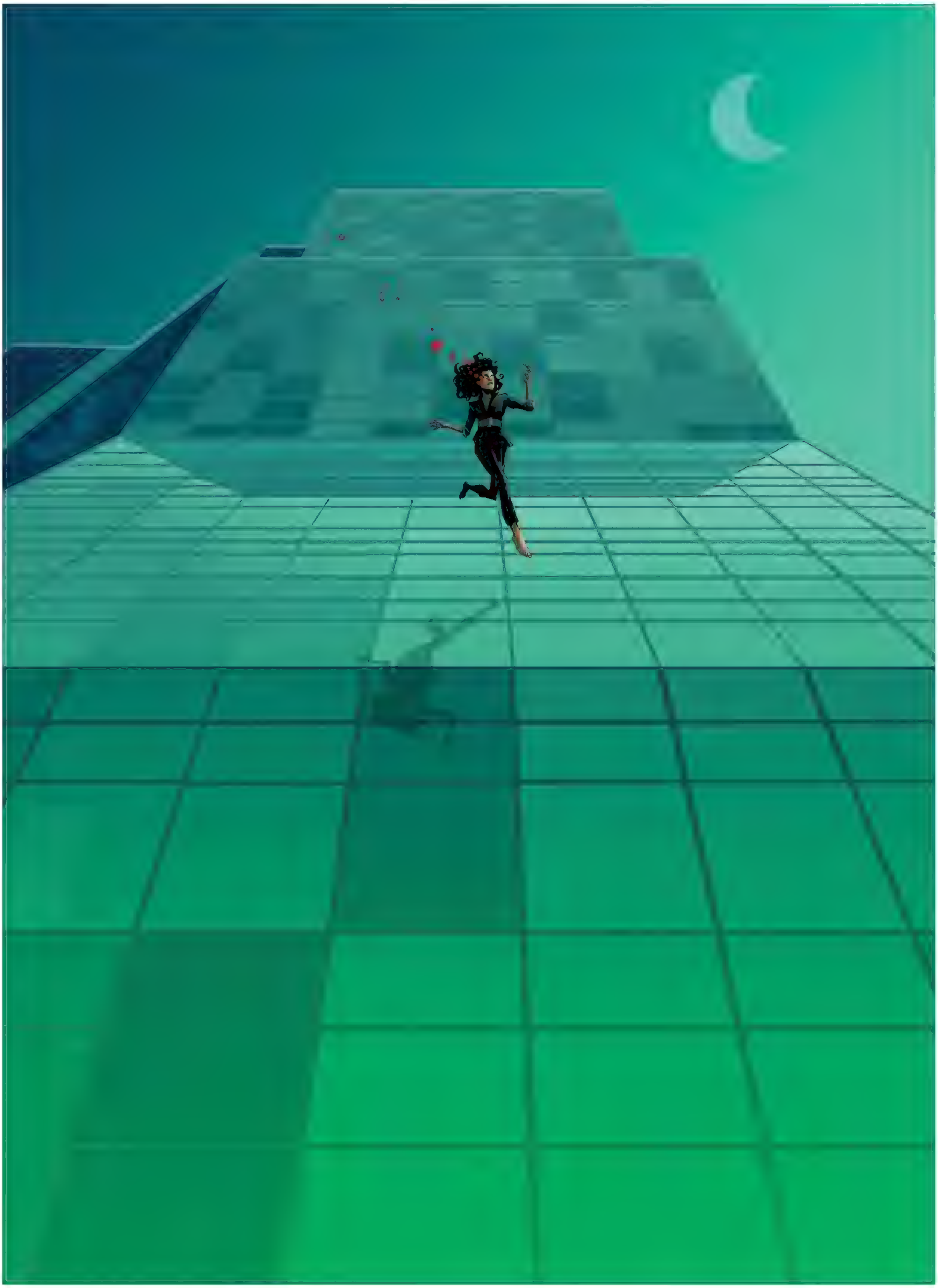
WHO IS NATHAN FOWLER?

A MAN I THOUGHT WAS DEAD. TURNS OUT HE'S BEEN HIDING FROM ME FOR THE LAST TWENTY YEARS.

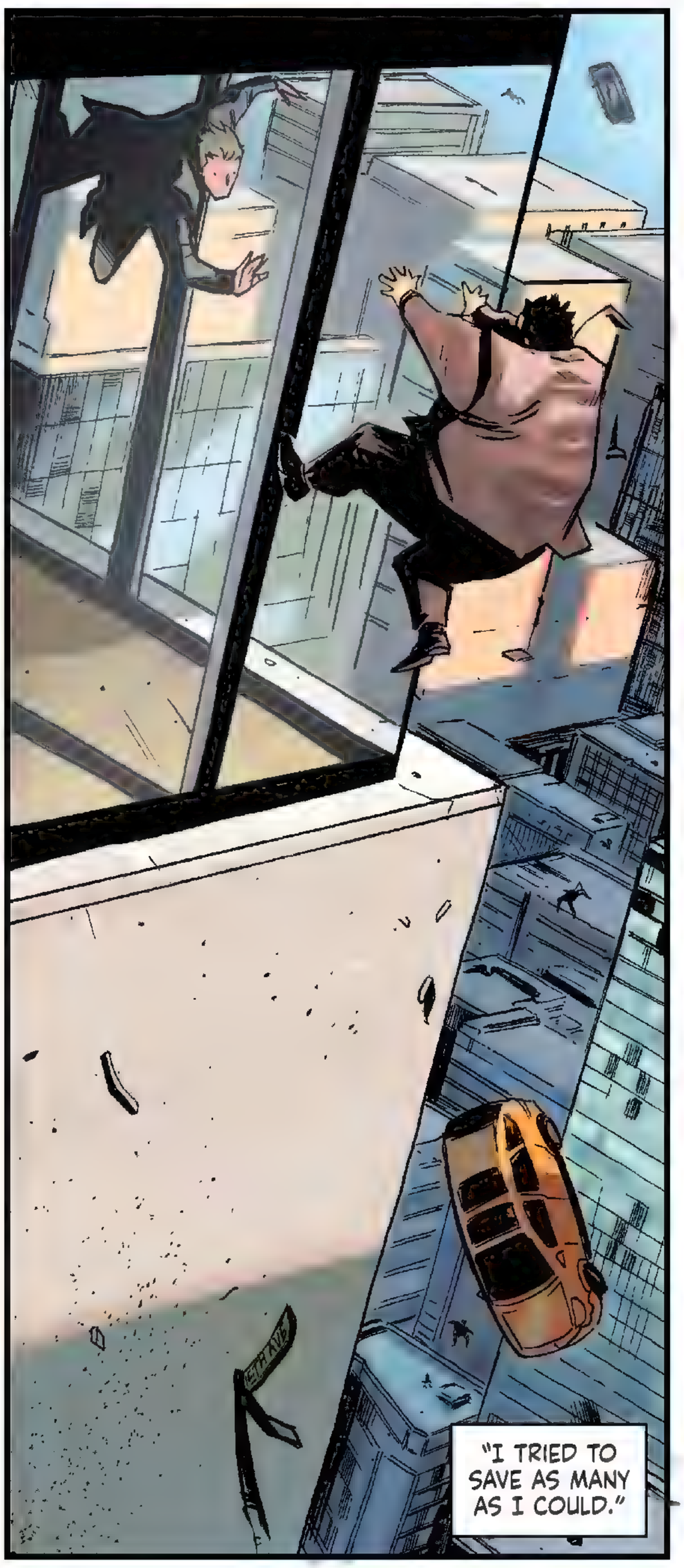
AND NOW HIS OWN DAUGHTER IS GOING TO LEAD ME RIGHT TO HIM.

SO I CAN STRANGLE THE BASTARD WITH MY OWN BARE HANDS.

END CHAPTER TWO



CHAPTER THREE


"I TRIED TO SAVE AS MANY AS I COULD."

SO MANY DIED THAT DAY. BUT THAT WASN'T THE TRAGEDY. THE TRAGEDY WAS WHAT ALMOST CAME NEXT.

EXTINCTION.

WE HAD TO ADAPT TO THIS NEW WORLD. FAST. LUCKILY, THANKS TO THE WORK I DID WITH YOUR FATHER, I WAS PREPARED.

WITH MAGNETS.

THE MAGNETIZATION ONLY CAME LATER. I HAD MUCH LARGER ISSUES TO DEAL WITH.

STARVATION.

WE HAD TO RETHINK FARMING. IRRIGATION. CATTLE. DELIVERY OF FOOD AND GOODS.

THE PRODUCTION LINE ITSELF HAD TO CHANGE. BECAUSE ALL OF IT RELIED ON ONE THING.

GRAVITY.

I WISH I'D HAD YOUR FATHER AROUND TO HELP ME.

WHY DIDN'T HE TELL ME HE WAS ALIVE?

I DON'T KNOW. DAD...

HE LOST IT. G-DAY DROVE HIM CRAZY. HE DOESN'T LEAVE THE APARTMENT.

NATE ALWAYS WAS THE EMOTIONAL ONE. SO FRAGILE DESPITE HIS BRILLIANCE. OR MAYBE BECAUSE OF IT.

BUT IS HE GETTING BETTER? IS THAT WHY HE HAD YOU REACH OUT TO ME?

THAT'S THE THING. HE DIDN'T.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE FRIENDS UNTIL TODAY.

OH. I SEE.

I WANT TO SEE THE WORLD. AND WITH DAD THE WAY HE IS...

YOU WANT MONEY.

OF COURSE YOU DO.

NO, I--I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU COULD HELP. WITH DAD. MAYBE SEEING HIS OLD FRIEND WOULD, I DON'T KNOW. UN-CRAZY HIM.

STOP HIM FROM RAVING ABOUT FIXING THE WAY THE WORLD IS.

THIS WAS A BAD IDEA.

IT WAS.

BECAUSE YOUR FATHER ISN'T CRAZY.

WHAT? YOU REALLY THINK HE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS?

I THINK YOUR FATHER IS THE MOST BRILLIANT MAN I KNEW. AND I KNOW HE WAS WORKING ON A CURE WHILE I WAS WORKING ON A WAY TO SURVIVE.

IF ANYONE COULD HAVE FIGURED IT OUT, IT'S HIM.

BUT WHAT WAS IT?

I DON'T KNOW.

IF YOU WERE BOTH WORKING ON THE PROBLEM, WHY NOT SHARE RESOURCES?

YOUR FATHER CAN BE A STUBBORN MAN.

SURE, BUT, ON SOMETHING THIS IMPORTANT...

DIDN'T HE TRUST YOU?

OH.

WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE. A PHRASE THAT YOU PROBABLY DON'T UNDERSTAND, DO YOU?

WE HAD OUR DIFFERENCES. BUT HOPEFULLY YOUR FATHER AND I CAN MEND FENCES.

I'LL HELP YOU SEE THE WORLD. IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO FOR THE DAUGHTER OF NATE FOWLER.

BUT WHY DIDN'T HE TRUST YOU?

LET'S GO ASK HIM TOGETHER. WHERE IS HE NOW?

THING IS, DAD'S REALLY PRIVATE. AND HE MIGHT FREAK OUT IF I DON'T WARN HIM YOU'RE COMING.

OF COURSE. JUST GIVE ME THE ADDRESS AND I'LL MEET YOU THERE TOMORROW.

I'LL JUST COME BACK. I'VE ALREADY BOTHERED YOU TOO MUCH.

THUNK

NO TROUBLE.

WHERE IS YOUR FATHER, WILLA?

KLIK

WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY SHOES?

THEY'RE IN LOCKDOWN MODE. ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF HAVING INVENTED THEM.

YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE UNLESS I WANT YOU TO.

I THINK THERE'S BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING--

TELL ME WHERE YOUR FATHER IS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING--

TELL ME.

THIS IS FUN. YOU'RE LIKE ONE OF THOSE INFLATABLE PUNCHING BAGS WE USED TO HAVE. KEEPS POPPING RIGHT BACK UP.

WHY--

I MADE MY FORTUNE OFF OF G-DAY. IF THE WORLD WENT BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS...I'D HAVE NOTHING.

AND SO WOULD YOU.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF. DO YOU WANT THE WORLD TO GO BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS?

WITH YOU TRAPPED ON THE GROUND? UNABLE TO SOAR THROUGH THE AIR?

HELPLESS?

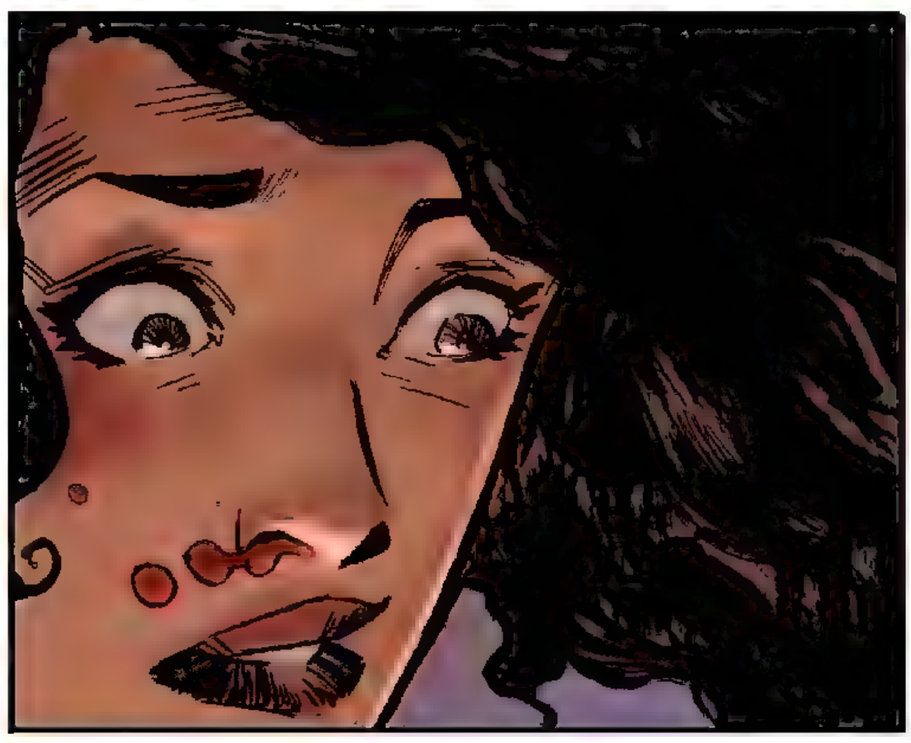
DON'T--

T-THANKS.

GET HER! SHE CAN'T LEAVE THIS BUILDING!

DAMMIT.

911
LOVELY.
POLICE



Psst. Joan!

WILLA! ARE YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE. MOSTLY.

I *MAY* HAVE BROKEN ROGER BARROW'S NOSE WITH MY FOREHEAD.

WILLA--!

TRUST ME, HE HAD IT COMING.

I NEED YOUR HELP.

I CAN'T HIDE YOU. THEY'LL LOOK HERE.

I DON'T WANT YOU TO HIDE ME.

I NEED YOU TO SNEAK ME HOME.

EVEN THE DIRTY LAUNDRY DOWN HERE SMELLS BETTER THAN MY CLEAN LAUNDRY.

IS THAT AN ORIGINAL PICASSO? WHO *LIVES* HERE?

SSHH.

SSHHH.

WHOA. STOP. BACK UP.

YOU KNOW THE WHOLE POINT OF HIDING IS NOT TALKING AND REVEALING YOURSELF, RIGHT?

NO WAY.

YOU CLEAN *EDISON'S* PLACE?

WHO DO YOU THINK GOT ME THE JOB?

EDISON'S *RICH?* WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

THE WHOLE DEAL WAS I WOULDN'T TELL ANYONE. HE DOESN'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW.

BUT WHY?

WAIT, WHY IS HE IN A WHEELCHAIR? HE DOESN'T NEED ONE.

HAVEN'T YOU FIGURED IT OUT BY NOW? PEOPLE DOWN HERE ARE CRAZY. ANYTHING TO PRETEND THE WORLD HASN'T CHANGED.

THAT INCLUDES FORCING A KID WHO DOESN'T NEED TO USE HIS LEGS INTO A WHEELCHAIR.

BUT... THAT MUST KILL HIM.

LET'S WORRY ABOUT YOU GETTING KILLED RIGHT NOW, OKAY?

ONE FLOOR DOWN, SIXTY MORE TO GO...

THERE USED TO BE A BOX IN HERE THAT WOULD TAKE PEOPLE UP AND DOWN THE ELEVATOR.

NOW YOU'RE JUST MAKING STUFF UP.

THEY ONLY TOOK THEM OUT FOR THE HELP. EVERYONE ELSE STILL USES THEM.

LIKE I SAID--STUCK IN THE PAST.

COPS UP ABOVE.

WE'RE GETTING OFF HERE.

AND THAT IS THE SAFEST WAY TO MAKE LOVE IN LOW GRAVITY.

ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE WE GO ON?

CAN A GIRL GET PREGNANT IF SOMEONE'S JUNK IS IN THE AIR AND, YOU KNOW... FLOATS IN?

NO, DONALD. THAT'S A COMMON URBAN MYTH.

BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULDN'T BE RESPONSIBLE WHEN CLEANING UP AFTER YOURSELF.

I ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT THAT.

SHUSH.

SIR, HAVE YOU SEEN A WOMAN ON THE PREMISES? BLACK, FIVE FOOT SIX? SHE'S ARMED AND DANGEROUS.

CRAP.

ROOF'S NOT AN OPTION ANYMORE.

NEVER BEEN ON THIS FLOOR. HOPEFULLY IT'S...

...EMPTY...

WE HAVE LAUNDRY SERVICE?

N--YES. COMPLIMENTS OF THE BOSS.

I HAVE A FULL LOAD, BUT I'LL BE RIGHT BACK DOWN FOR ANYTHING YOU NEED CLEANED.

SEE? TOLD YOU THEY NOTICED OUR WORK!

HEY, LADY! YOUR LAUNDRY'S...

...BLEEDING.

OH, YEAH. REALLY BIG MESS A COUPLE FLOORS DOWN.

SOMETHING ABOUT NOT MAKING QUOTAS.

TOLD YOU THEY'RE SERIOUS ABOUT THEIR QUOTAS.

I HATE THIS PLACE.

OH. HI THERE.

WE NEED TO SEARCH YOUR LAUNDRY, MA'AM.

IS THAT REALLY NECESSARY?

I'M AFRAID SO. THERE'S A DANGEROUS FUGITIVE OUT THERE--

PLAN B...

AAAH!

STEP AWAY OR I'LL KILL HER!

YOU SAID IT YOURSELF-- I'M DANGEROUS! DID YOU SEE WHAT I DID TO BARROW?

HELP ME! PLEASE DON'T LET ME DIE!

RELEASE THE WOMAN!

THANKS FOR THE HELP.

YOU HAVE UNDERWEAR ON YOUR HEAD.

GET HER!

ARE YOU OKAY? DID SHE HURT YOU?

I'M FINE.

MY HERO.

OKAY. EVERYTHING'S FINE. YOU GOT AWAY FROM THE CRAZY DUDE WHO TOTALLY TRIED TO KILL YOU.

NOW I JUST NEED TO GET TO...

DAD...

THAT'S NOT RIGHT.

THE DOOR'S OPEN. BUT...THE DOOR'S ***NEVER*** OPEN.

OH NO.

OH GOD.

I'M TOO LATE.

END CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER FOUR

DAD!

NO NO NO *NO*, THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING!

THIS IS ALL MY *FAULT!*

I NEVER SHOULD'VE--

UNNGH.

DAD?

WHAT THE--

WAIT, I KNOW YOU! YOU TRIED TO *ROB* ME! WITH YOUR FRIEND--

HEY! LET GO!

NO WAY, YOU NEED TO *PROTECT* ME!

I--WHAT? FROM WHO?

THAT CRAZY DUDE *BIT* ME! WHO BITES SOMEONE?

I'M GOING TO DO MUCH WORSE IF YOU DON'T STEP AWAY FROM HER.

SO *YOU GUYS* DID ALL THIS?

I JUST WANTED THAT DAMN MILK SHIPMENT! I DIDN'T SIGN UP FOR WHATEVER THIS IS!

SO JUST LET ME LEAVE AND--

YOU'RE OKAY.

OF COURSE I'M OKAY. THESE TWO AMATEURS THOUGHT THEY GOT THE JUMP ON ME.

COME ON. I'M JUST TRYING TO PAY MY WAY THROUGH COLLEGE--

DON'T TALK. TALKING GETS YOU PUNCHED MORE.

SO BARROW HASN'T BEEN HERE?

ROGER BARROW?

YOU KNOW THAT RICH PRICK? THEN WHY THE HELL DO YOU LIVE ALL THE WAY UP HERE?

Uh... YEAH.

WHY WOULD ROGER BARROW KNOW WHERE I LIVE?

HE DOESN'T. YET.

PROBABLY.

WILLA, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT BARROW IS CAPABLE OF?

I DO.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE? ARE YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE.

DID HE DO THAT TO YOU?

AT LEAST I CAN STILL BREATHE THROUGH MY NOSE.

UNLIKE HIM.

HE'LL FIGURE OUT SOON ENOUGH WHERE WE ARE. WE NEED TO GO.

THAT'S A GREAT IDEA. YOU GUYS SHOULD DEFINITELY HEAD OUT--

SHUTTING UP.

WE'RE NOT LEAVING. LET HIM COME. I CAN TAKE ROGER BARROW.

NO, YOU REALLY CAN'T.

DAD...DO YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO FIX THE WORLD?

I DO. THERE'S A PLACE WE NEED TO GO TO. IT'S A TRIP I'VE BEEN PREPARING FOR FOR THE LAST TWENTY YEARS.

AND THE MAP IS IN HERE.

THEN WE NEED TO RUN. BECAUSE ROGER BARROW DOESN'T WANT YOU TO FIX IT.

WHICH MEANS HE WON'T STOP UNTIL YOU'RE DEAD.

I CAN'T GO.

DAD, COME ON--

I CAN'T!

I KNOW, DAD. YOUR CONDITION--

I DON'T HAVE A CONDITION.

DAD--

WHEN YOUR MOM WENT UP INTO THE SKY... I COULD HAVE SAVED HER.

"I COULD HAVE TRIED. BUT THEN I HEARD YOU CRY."

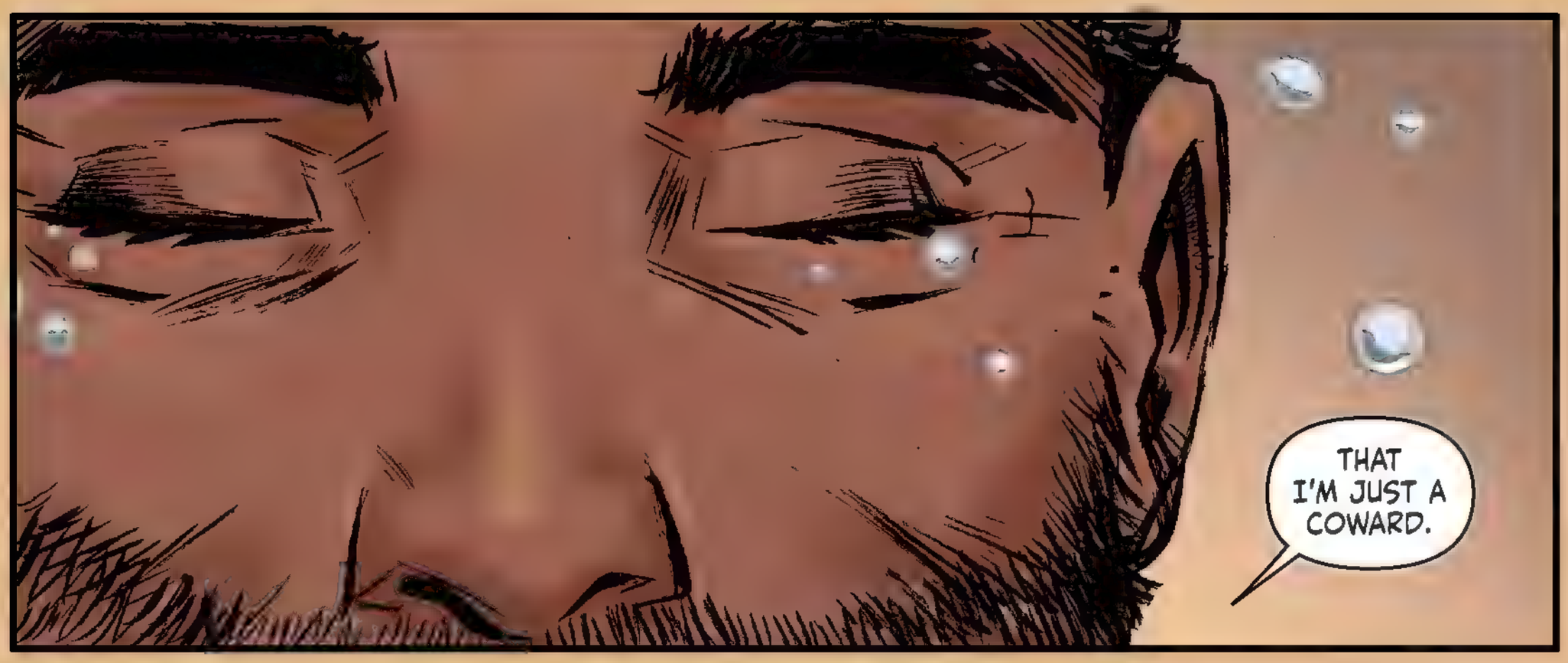
"I WAS A BABY. HELPLESS. YOU KNEW I NEEDED YOU."

"NO. YOU WERE INDOORS. YOU WERE FINE--THERE WAS A CEILING OVER YOUR HEAD.

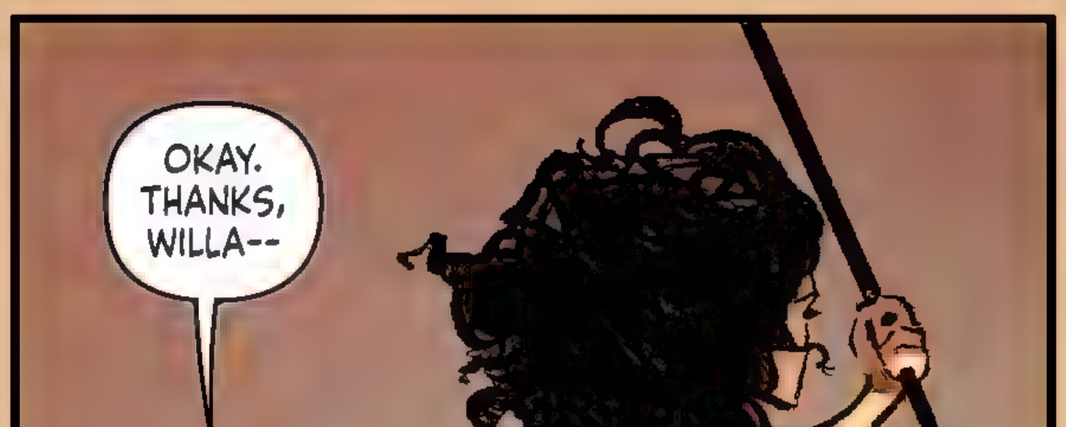
"I HAD AN EXCUSE. SOMETHING I COULD TELL MYSELF INSTEAD OF FACING THE TRUTH. THAT I WAS TOO AFRAID TO DO ANYTHING.

"I'VE BEEN TRAINING SINCE G-DAY FOR THIS JOURNEY. AND I STILL CAN'T STEP OUT THE FRONT DOOR.

"BECAUSE DOING THAT WOULD BE ADMITTING THE TRUTH."


THAT I'M JUST A COWARD.

WE'LL STAY HERE. WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT. TOGETHER.
OKAY?


OKAY. THANKS, WILLA--

DAMN. THAT WAS COLD.

YOU AND YOUR DUMB MOUTH.

HI SHIRLEY. THIS IS GOING TO BE HARD TO EXPLAIN.

DON'T LOOK TOO SHOCKED.

OKAY, YEAH. I KNOCKED MY DAD OUT AND CARRIED HIM AROUND IN A BAG.

SO THAT'S NOT GREAT.

BUT IT'S FOR HIS OWN GOOD. WE NEED TO GET HIM OUT OF TOWN. THING IS--

THEY'VE KIDNAPPED HIM.

WHAT? NO. I MEAN, THEY TRIED. THAT'S WHY I TOOK HIM HERE.

NOT YOUR FATHER. EDISON.

THEY'VE KIDNAPPED EDISON.

WHAT HAVE YOU GOTTEN YOURSELF INTO?

YOUR DAD--WILLA, WHAT IS GOING ON?

WHAT DID THEY SAY?

WHAT DID THEY SAY?

THAT YOU HAVE SOMETHING THEY NEED. AND IF YOU DELIVER IT BY THE END OF THE DAY, EDISON WILL BE FINE.

WHAT DO THEY WANT?

AAAH!

HEY STRANGER.

SHIRLEY?! WAIT, WHERE AM I?!

HOW DID I GET HERE? ARE ALL THE DOORS CLOSED? AND WINDOWS?!

EVERYTHING'S CLOSED. YOU'RE SAFE.

OKAY. OKAY.

SHIRLEY? ARE WE AT YOUR OFFICE?

WE ARE.

NICE PLACE YOU GOT HERE.

WHERE'S WILLA?

ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS SEE THE WORLD.

I MEAN, SURE, THAT'S SELFISH. BUT I FIGURED IT WASN'T ANY WORSE THAN A NORMAL TWENTY-SOMETHING.

THIS ISN'T YOUR FAULT. BARROW WANTS ME.

HE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD UNTIL I STUCK MY DUMB NOSE INTO THINGS.

HOW DID I SCREW UP SO BAD?

WATCH YOUR MOUTH.

YOU HAVE YOUR MOTHER'S NOSE. I WON'T HEAR YOU SPEAK ILL OF IT.

NOW THAT SOUNDS LIKE *ME.*

YOU DIDN'T SCREW UP, WILLA. I DID. IT'S ALL I'VE EVER DONE SINCE G-DAY.

IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THAT. I'LL TURN MYSELF IN. LET HIM KNOW I'M HERE.

BUT IF YOU REALLY CAN FIX THE WORLD... ISN'T THAT MORE IMPORTANT THAN ONE PERSON?

HE'S JUST A KID.

HE DOESN'T DESERVE TO BE WRAPPED UP IN ALL THIS.

SO I GUESS WE HAVE NO CHOICE.

TIME FOR A RESCUE MISSION.

WHAT?

I CAN'T TURN YOU IN. I CAN'T LET EDISON DIE. SO I'LL SAVE HIM.

I CAN'T LET YOU PUT YOURSELF IN DANGER LIKE THAT. NOT BECAUSE OF ME.

THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF THE PLAN, DAD. YOU DON'T HAVE A CHOICE.

CRIPPLING FEAR OF GOING OUTSIDE, REMEMBER?

I'LL CALL BARROW--

PHONE LINES ARE DOWN. A BIG RAINSTORM'S COMING IN.

I'LL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL IT PASSES TO MAKE MY MOVE.

WILLA--

I'VE GOT THIS, DAD. I'VE TAKEN CARE OF MYSELF FOR A LONG TIME. I CAN DO THIS.

AND ACTUALLY, I THINK I KNOW HOW...

ROCKET

YOU'RE GOING TO GO OUT IN THE RAIN?

BARROW WON'T EXPECT ME TO DO ANYTHING THAT CRAZY.

NO KIDDING. WITH GOOD REASON.

DO YOU HAVE THE EQUIPMENT OR NOT?

I'VE GOT IT. BUT I HATE TO THINK OF YOU OUT THERE IN IT.

WHILE EVERYONE'S DISTRACTED, I'LL SWOOP IN AND GRAB EDISON. EASY PEASY.

HOW'D YOUR DAD TAKE IT?

ABOUT AS WELL AS YOU COULD EXPECT?

BUT THERE'S NOTHING HE CAN DO ABOUT IT--

DID YOU LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN?

NO I--

NO WAY.

HE LEFT. HE ACTUALLY WENT OUTSIDE.

I TOLD YOU NOT TO UNDERESTIMATE HIM.

BUT, EVEN IGNORING HIS OVERWHELMING FEAR OF ANYWHERE WITHOUT A CEILING--THE STORM'S COMING. I TOLD HIM.

OH NO.

WHAT?

DAD DOESN'T KNOW WHAT STORMS ARE LIKE NOW. HE'S NEVER SEEN ONE.

YOU CAN DO THIS.

ONE, TWO--

HTT! YOU'VE GOT IT!

THAT WASN'T SO BAD. THAT--

--WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

Huh. THAT'S NOT SO SCARY--

END CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER FIVE

CRAZY LADY.

:KOFF KOFF:

THIS IS...WHERE ARE WE?

IN THE MIDDLE OF A RAINSTORM. IN A POCKET OF AIR THAT AIN'T GONNA LAST LONG.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT WORKED.

MY SMART BABY.

DESPERATE TIMES AND ALL THAT...

WATER COALESCING INTO GLOBULES AND CIRCLING THE EARTH. I THEORIZED IT, BUT SEEING IT...

IT'S... KIND OF BEAUTIFUL.

BEAUTIFUL? IT ALMOST KILLED YOU! AND WHAT WERE YOU DOING RUNNING OUT ON US LIKE THAT?

YOUR FRIEND IS IN DANGER. BECAUSE OF *ME.* EVERYONE IS.

I NEED TO TURN MYSELF IN.

YOU BARELY MADE IT TEN FEET WITHOUT ALMOST DYING.

YOU'RE LUCKY THIS WASN'T A BIG ONE.

THERE'S A REASON NO ONE GOES OUTSIDE WHEN A STORM COMES.

I ONLY HAVE ONE TANK LEFT NOW. WE'LL TAKE TURNS BREATHING, SWIM OUT OF HERE, AND GET YOU BACK TO SAFETY.

NO. I'M GOING WITH YOU.

YOU'LL JUST SLOW ME DOWN!

I'M. GOING. WITH. YOU.

FINE.

AND NO KNOCKING ME OUT WHEN I TURN MY HEAD AGAIN.

I WASN'T GOING TO DO THAT.

PROBABLY.

AT LEAST TAKE THIS.

I MEAN, DON'T SHOOT IT. THAT'LL SEND YOU FLYING. BUT IT SHOULD SCARE THE CRAP OUT OF PEOPLE.

SO WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

WAIT UNTIL IT'S RAINING ON ONE OF THE BUILDINGS AND SWIM IN SOMEHOW.

THAT'S YOUR PLAN?

DO YOU HAVE A BETTER IDEA?

ACTUALLY...

YOUR PARENTS ARE VERY DISAPPOINTED IN YOU, EDISON.

GOOD.

THEY HAD HIGH HOPES FOR YOU. THANKFULLY, THEY ALSO HAD MORE CHILDREN.

IS THAT WHY YOU GAVE HER YOUR BOOTS? THAT'S HOW WE FOUND YOU, YOU KNOW.

BUT I'M SURE YOU GIVE TEN-THOUSAND-DOLLAR PIECES OF HARDWARE TO EVERYONE.

SHE'S NOT COMING.

MAYBE. MAYBE--

SHE'S NOT GOING TO COME. I WORK WITH WILLA. THAT'S IT.

SHE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT ME AS MUCH AS YOU THINK.

RUN.

--NOT?

THIS IS GOING TO BE EASIER THAN I THOUGHT.

GUNS WON'T WORK UNDER-WATER.

RUN!

SHE WOULDN'T...

OH, SHE WOULD.

DAMMIT! DON'T LEAVE ME!

FZZZT

STUPID SHOES... SHORTED OUT...!

YOU BASTARDS! COME SAVE ME!

SORRY BOSS.

SO YOUR PLAN IS THAT WE ALL DROWN?

NOT MY PLAN, BUT NO. TWO QUICK TUGS AND WE GET HAULED OUT OF HERE.

TUG TUG

WHAT ABOUT BARROW?

HE SHOULD BE FINE--

HELP!

OH NO. WE NEED TO GET HIM TOO--

HE'S STILL DOWN THERE!

STOP! IT'S TOO LATE!

WHO?

BARROW. HE'S...

HE'S DEAD.

HEY. HE DID THIS TO HIMSELF.

YEAH. I GUESS SO.

LOOK AT YOU. YOU'RE STANDING OUTSIDE.

AND I WANT TO VOMIT I'M SO SCARED.

CAN WE PLEASE GO INSIDE NOW?

SURE.

THOUGH I DO HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS, NOW THAT I'M OUT HERE.

IS THERE STILL LIGHTNING? ARE THERE GIANT BUGS? I THEORIZED THAT, WITHOUT GRAVITY, ALL INSECTS WOULD--

I THINK I LIKED IT BETTER WHEN YOU WERE A CRAZY SHUT-IN.

WHAM

HI NATE. LONG TIME NO SEE.

ROGER. THIS IS BETWEEN US. PLEASE, LEAVE HER ALONE.

I *SAVED* THE WORLD! *ME!* WHILE YOU *HID* LIKE A *COWARD!*

AND I KNOW YOU. YOU WANT TO RUIN EVERYTHING I'VE BUILT! TAKE IT ALL AWAY!

I DON'T WANT TO DO THAT.

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU.

NO!

WHAT'RE YOU--*STOP!*

YOU IDIOT! WE'RE BOTH GOING TO DIE!

NOT... BOTH OF US...IF I GET...THAT...

OKAY. MAYBE BOTH OF US.

NO. JUST YOU.

SAY HI TO YOUR MOM FOR ME.

WILLA!

HOTEL
MALL
VACANT
AIR

I'VE GOT YOU.

...DAD?

YOUR MOTHER WOULD BE PROUD OF THE WOMAN YOU GREW UP TO BE.

WHAT... WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

READ MY JOURNAL. I NEED YOU TO BE THE BRAVE ONE. DO WHAT I COULDN'T DO.

FIX WHAT I COULDN'T.

GOODBYE, WILLA.

DAD, NO--

YOU WERE RIGHT. THIS WORLD *IS* BEAUTIFUL.

I CAN'T WAIT FOR YOU TO SEE IT ALL.

DAD!

DAD!

UNION STATION
PENNSYLVANIA RR
BURLINGTON ROUTE
G M & O R R
MILWAUKEE ROAD

I WANTED TO SEE THE WORLD.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.

I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DO THIS, DAD.

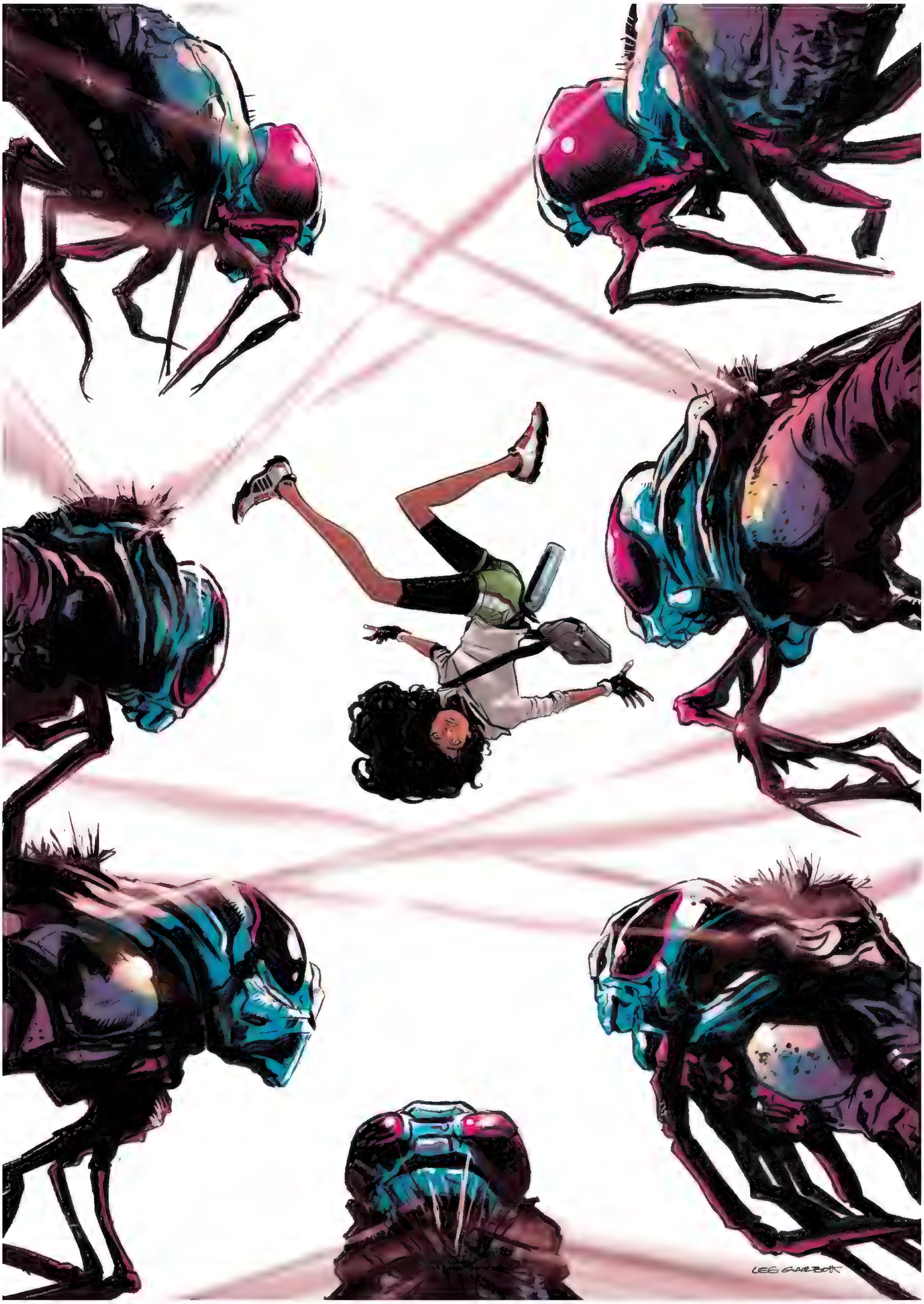
BUT I WILL. I HAVE TO.

FOR YOU.

FOR ALL OF US.

NO PRESSURE, RIGHT?

END CHAPTER FIVE



CHAPTER SIX

DADDY, I'M SCARED.

IT'S OKAY, HONEY. I'M RIGHT HERE.

WILL IT HURT?

IT WON'T. I PROMISE.

THERE YOU GO. IT'LL BE OVER BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.

GET READY. IT'S STARTING.

DADDY, IT FEELS LIKE SOMEONE'S *PUSHING* DOWN ON ME.

IT *HURTS!*

IT'LL BE FINE.

DO WE HAVE TO DO THIS?

WE DO, HONEY.

"IT'S THE ONLY WAY WE'LL GET TO SEE YOUR GRANDMA."

SEE? IT'S NOT SO BAD.

IS THIS HOW THE WORLD USED TO BE?

YEAH. SORT OF. PEOPLE WALKED ON THE GROUND, NOT THE WALLS. AND THEY DIDN'T NEED BOOTS LIKE OURS.

AND AN INVISIBLE *"SOMETHING"* JUST...HELD EVERYONE DOWN?

THAT'S RIGHT.

YOU'RE MAKING STUFF UP, DADDY.

DO YOU KNOW THIS WOMAN?

AFRAID NOT.

DO YOU KNOW THIS WOMAN?

YOU, IN THE HOODIE--DO YOU KNOW THIS WOMAN?

SORRY. TRYING TO SLEEP. WHAT'S UP?

THERE'S A TERRORIST ON THE LOOSE. DID MAJOR DAMAGE TO A BUILDING IN CHICAGO.

HAVEN'T SEEN HER.

MAN, YOU MUST HATE THIS.

EXCUSE ME?

RIDING ON A TRAIN. IT'S THE CLOSEST WE GET NOWADAYS TO THE WORLD PRE G-DAY.

AND YOUR LEGS--

I GET THE POINT. AND NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

JERK.

JUST SAYING. I FIGURE A DUDE LIKE YOU WOULD AVOID SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

"WHEREVER YOU'RE GOING MUST BE WORTH IT."

MAGNETIZED CARGO ONLY

FRAGILE

I HAD TO WAIT FOR A STOP TO COME BACK.

I BROUGHT YOU SOME FOOD. AND I STOLE A BAG OF WINE FROM THE JERK NEXT TO ME.

YOU OKAY BACK HERE?

SURE. I'M FINE. IT'S NICE AND QUIET, SO I CAN KEEP REPLAYING MY DAD DYING OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN MY HEAD WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.

THOUGH AT LEAST THAT DISTRACTS ME FROM THE FACT THAT THERE'S A GIANT BOUNTY ON MY HEAD.

SORRY.

DON'T BE.

WILLA... WHERE ARE WE GOING?

KANSAS CITY.

AND WHY KANSAS CITY?

DAD ASKED ME TO... DO SOMETHING THERE.

THAT'S WONDERFULLY MYSTERIOUS. WHAT IS IT?

FIX THE WORLD! BRING GRAVITY BACK!

WILLA?

HEY. YOU CAN TELL ME.

NO. I CAN'T.

WHY NOT?

BECAUSE YOU WOULDN'T...

...UNDERSTAND.

OKAY. THAT'S FINE. KANSAS CITY. CAN YOU TELL ME ***WHERE*** IN KANSAS CITY?

I ACTUALLY DON'T KNOW. I'M TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT. MY DAD GAVE ME THIS.

THE BOOK SAYS THE THING I NEED TO DO IS IN KANSAS CITY. BUT THE REST IS SORT OF GOBBLEDYGOOK.

SO IT'S A TREASURE MAP. YOU KNOW, I'M REALLY GOOD AT TREASURE MAPS.

SORRY.

IT'S OKAY. BUT FIGURE IT OUT SOON. BECAUSE ONCE WE HIT THE CITY, WE NEED TO MOVE FAST.

WE BARELY MADE IT OUT OF CHICAGO. BARROW'S LOOKING ***EVERYWHERE*** FOR YOU.

"AND HE'S NOT GOING TO STOP."

SEARCH EVERYWHERE! WE NEED TO FIND THAT DAMNED GIRL!

PLACE IS STRIPPED CLEAN, MR. BARROW.

THEY HAD TO GET OUT OF HERE IN A HURRY. WHICH MEANS THEY MAY HAVE LEFT SOMETHING BEHIND.

KEEP LOOKING!

SIR, WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THEY'RE HEADED--

FOWLER'S DAUGHTER HAS HIS JOURNAL. IN IT, HE MUST HAVE DETAILED WHERE HE HID THE CURE FOR G-DAY.

WE NEED TO FIND HER BEFORE SHE RUINS ***EVERYTHING.***

UNFORTUNATELY, WE DON'T KNOW WHICH TRAIN SHE BOARDED. AND SHE HAS A HEAD START.

BUT DON'T WORRY, WE'LL POST PEOPLE AT ALL THE STATIONS SHE'S LIKELY TO--

NO. IT'S NOT ENOUGH.

SHUT DOWN THE TRAIN.

EXCUSE ME?

WE OWN THE TECHNOLOGY THAT LETS THEM TRAVEL ON THE RAILS. SO SHUT IT DOWN.

SIR, HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE WOULD BE ***STRANDED.*** IT'S A P.R. NIGHTMARE.

AND LIKE I SAID, WE DON'T KNOW ***WHICH*** TRAIN...

SHUT DOWN ***ALL*** OF THEM.

BUT SIR--

I. DON'T. ***CARE.***

NOTHING MATTERS MORE THAN FINDING THAT GIRL.

ALL RIGHT, EDISON DAVIES. WHAT'RE YOU HIDING?

I KNOW YOUR FAMILY IS INVOLVED IN A LOT OF SHADY STUFF. IS IT WEAPONS? DRUGS?

MAYBE NEXT TIME, DON'T SIT DOWN NEXT TO A REPORTER WHO KNOWS ALL ABOUT--

--YOU. WHO ARE *YOU*?

WAIT A MINUTE...I RECOGNIZE YOU...

NO YOU DON'T.

YES I DO! YOU'RE THAT FUGITIVE GIRL!

NO. I'M NOT.

WAIT, ARE YOU WHY EDISON DAVIES KEEPS COMING BACK HERE? WHY WOULD HE INVOLVE HIMSELF WITH AN UPPER TERRORIST?

ARE YOU WORKING TOGETHER SOMEHOW? *OOOH!* OR ARE YOU HIS LOVER?

STOP. TALKING.

WERE YOU BARROW'S LOVER TOO? IS THAT WHY HE WANTS YOU SO--

DON'T YOU DARE--

HE'S NOT WORTH IT.

NOTICED HE WAS GONE. HAD A FEELING I KNEW WHERE HE WENT.

I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO GET A SCOOP ON SOME ILLEGAL STUFF YOUR FAMILY'S UP TO.

I DIDN'T THINK I'D STUMBLE ONTO A STORY *THIS* BIG.

SHE'S NOT A STORY. SHE'S A PERSON. AND SHE'S IN DANGER.

SURE, WHATEVER. YOU GUYS HAVE TWO OPTIONS RIGHT NOW--EITHER I YELL REALLY LOUD AND GET SECURITY IN HERE...

OR?

OR YOU LET ME INTERVIEW YOU.

AND THEN WHEN IT'S DONE, YOU STILL YELL REALLY LOUD.

THAT'S A RISK YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE.

YOU HEARD THE SECURITY GUARDS. I'M A TERRORIST. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I WON'T JUST THROW YOU OUT OF THE WINDOW?

THE FACT THAT YOU'RE STILL TALKING TO ME.

COME ON. I'LL MAKE YOU FAMOUS.

I DON'T WANT TO BE FAMOUS.

EVERYONE WANTS TO BE FAMOUS. I WRITE PUFF PIECES ALL THE TIME. I'LL MAKE YOU LOOK GOOD.

TRUST ME, YOU COULD USE SOME GOOD P.R., TERRORIST LADY--

WAIT. SOMETHING'S WRONG.

WHY ARE WE FLOATING?

WE SHOULD BE AGAINST THE WALL. WE AREN'T DUE FOR ANOTHER STOP FOR AN HOUR.

YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'VE BEEN SLOWING TO A STOP FOR THE LAST COUPLE MINUTES.

SO WHAT?

HEY, HANDS OFF--

THE BOOTS AREN'T WORKING EITHER.

THIS IS BARROW.

WHAT, YOU THINK HE SHUT DOWN AN ENTIRE TRAIN JUST FOR YOU?

GUESS YOU DO.

WE NEED TO GET OFF THIS TRAIN.

WHERE ARE WE?

I DON'T KNOW. ALL I CAN SEE ARE TREES. LOTS AND LOTS OF TREES.

I THINK WE'RE IN A FOREST.

OH NO. THIS IS NOT GOOD.

WHY? AT LEAST WE'RE NOT STRANDED IN THE DESERT. WITH THE TREES, WE'LL HAVE A LITTLE VERTICAL SAFETY.

NO. WE WON'T.

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

WAIT--YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THOSE STORIES, DO YOU?

WHAT STORIES?

THEY'RE NOT STORIES.

EDISON. WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

DID YOU EVER WONDER WHY PEOPLE ONLY LIVE IN CITIES NOW? FORESTS OFFER A NATURAL CEILING. LOTS OF THINGS TO GRAB HOLD OF.

I...NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT. TO BE HONEST.

WELL, PEOPLE ***DID*** LIVE IN THE FORESTS. FOR A LITTLE BIT.

AND THEN THEY ALL DIED.

COME ON. I--I WOULD HAVE HEARD ABOUT THIS.

WE KEPT IT FROM UPPERS. WE DIDN'T WANT ANYONE FINDING OUT AND THE HYSTERIA THAT WOULD COME FROM--

Open

WAIT, DON'T!

I'M A REPORTER, EDISON. DON'T YOU THINK IF THE FOREST WAS A SUPER DANGEROUS MURDER ZONE, I'D KNOW ABOUT IT?

CLOSE THE DOOR. ***NOW.***

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN? THE BOOGEYMAN'S GONNA GET ME?

DON'T. MOVE.

COME ON! THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF--

OH GOD--

AAAH!

EDISON... WHAT WERE THOSE?

THAT'S WHAT KILLED ALL THE PEOPLE. BECAUSE OF THEIR LIFESPAN, THEY ADAPTED TO THE GRAVITY FASTER THAN US. WITHOUT THE LIMITATIONS OF GRAVITY, THEY GREW TO AN ENORMOUS SIZE.

WHAT ARE THEY?

"BUGS."

DRAGONFLIES ADAPTED MOST QUICKLY. I THINK IN PART BECAUSE THEY'RE CARNIVOROUS. THEY USED TO EAT OTHER BUGS, BUT AS THEY GOT BIGGER...

THEY *ATE* THE PEOPLE?

ALL OF THEM. MASSACRES ALL AROUND THE WORLD.

WE'VE DEVELOPED MEASURES TO KEEP THEM FROM THE CITIES AT LEAST.

ALL RIGHT. SO WE WAIT FOR HELP TO COME.

HELP ISN'T COMING. BARROW IS. IF HE CATCHES US, WE'RE AS GOOD AS DEAD.

IF WE GO OUT THERE WE'RE AS GOOD AS DEAD!

I KNOW--

AIEEE!

HELP MY DADDY! PLEASE *HELP* HIM!

DADDY!

IT'S OKAY HONEY! IT'S GOING TO BE--

AAGH!

CLOSE THE DOOR!

SOMEONE SAVE MY DADDY!

WILLA, DON'T--

END CHAPTER SIX

CHAPTER SEVEN

LET ME GO! I NEED TO HELP HER!

NO ONE'S OPENING THAT DOOR.

BUT MY FRIEND IS OUT THERE! AND THAT POOR GIRL'S DAD! THEY'LL BE ***KILLED!***

MY DAAAADDY!

LISTEN, THERE ARE A COUPLE HUNDRED PEOPLE ON THIS TRAIN.

IF WE OPEN THAT DOOR, ***EVERYONE'S*** AS A GOOD AS DEAD.

BUT... THERE ***HAS*** TO BE A WAY...

SORRY, BUDDY...

"SHE'S ON HER OWN."

COME ON...

I'M NOT... LETTING YOU...

...DIE--

OOOF!

OH MY GOD, THANK YOU! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU--

DON'T THANK ME YET.

THIS CAN'T BE REAL. THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING--

CLOSE YOUR EYES AND HOLD ON TIGHT.

BLAM

OKAY, NOW--

UNGH!

IT'S STILL GOT ME! IT'S STILL *MOVING!*

BLAM

COME ON! YOU DON'T HAVE A HEAD! THAT'S NOT FAIR!

OKAY. WELL AT LEAST WE'RE...

...SCREWED.

STAY HERE. DON'T MOVE.

BUT--

YOU ARE ***NOT*** LEAVING YOUR DAUGHTER ALONE. YOU ARE ***NOT.*** UNDERSTOOD?

YES MA'AM.

HEY BUGS! FOLLOW ME! I'M DELICIOUS!

RELAX. THOSE AREN'T IMPOSSIBLY GIGANTIC BUGS.

YOU'RE BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL. IT'S DANCE CLASS. THAT'S ALL THIS IS.

JUST A DANCE.

OH YEAH. I'M A TERRIBLE DANCER.

SKKKKRK!

GAH!

CHOMP

EAT THIS!

CLICK CLICK CLICK

WHAT IN THE...?

EDISON...?

HI.

YOU SAVED MY LIFE.

YOU HAVE A SWORD.

I DO.

THAT'S AN ACTUAL SWORD.

YES. YES IT IS.

GIANT BUGS AND SWORDS. SURE. OKAY.

THE KEY IS TO SEVER THE SPINAL CORD. OTHERWISE THE BODY STILL KICKS FOR A BIT.

I'LL... REMEMBER THAT THE NEXT TIME.

OH NO.

QUICK, COME ON--

RELAX. SHE'S WITH ME.

WAIT, THAT'S *YOUR* BUTTERFLY?

...IS A SENTENCE I DIDN'T THINK I'D BE SAYING TODAY.

NEED A LIFT?

DON'T GET ME WRONG, SHE'LL TEAR YOUR ARMS OFF AND EAT THEM IF SHE GETS THE CHANCE.

SO DON'T GIVE HER THE CHANCE.

I HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING OUT THERE FOR A LITTLE BIT.

MAYBE THEY JUST WENT AWAY.

OR FOLLOWED THAT CRAZY LADY.

LET ME GO OUT THERE AND CHECK. WORST CASE, I DIE. BEST CASE, I CAN STILL SAVE MY FRIEND.

PLEASE, YOU NEED TO--

SURE.

YEAH, GO AHEAD. BETTER YOU THAN US.

OH. GREAT. OKAY. GET READY, EDISON.

DEEP BREATH--

HEY EDISON! I'M RIDING A BUTTERFLY!

Huh.

"WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME."

MORE BUGS WILL ARRIVE SOON. THAT TRAIN IS A DEATH TRAP. WE NEED TO GET EVERYONE OFF IT AS FAST AS WE CAN.

MOVE QUICKLY... WHERE?

OUR FARM ISN'T FAR FROM HERE.

YOU'RE FARMERS. YOU GUYS. BADASS WARRIOR FARMERS.

SURE. WHY NOT?

WHY DID YOU SAVE THAT MAN?

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?

I WATCHED YOU. YOU DIDN'T DO IT FOR HIM.

WHO ELSE WOULD I DO IT FOR?

YOURSELF.

WHAT ARE YOU RUNNING FROM?

ME? I'M NOT RUNNING FROM ANYONE. NOPE. NOT ME. DEFINITELY NOT.

I DIDN'T SAY WHO. I SAID ***WHAT.***

OH.

THERE'S A WEIGHT ON YOUR SHOULDERS. AND A SADNESS IN YOUR EYES THAT I'VE... SEEN BEFORE.

YOU TALK TO ALL THE WOMEN YOU PICK UP ON YOUR BUTTERFLY THIS WAY?

A PART OF YOU WAS HOPING YOU WOULDN'T MAKE IT. AM I RIGHT?

WHATEVER IT IS YOU THINK YOU KNOW ABOUT ME, YOU DON'T. OKAY?

WILLA!

YOU'RE OKAY!

BELIEVE IT OR NOT.

EDISON DAVIES, MEET...

...THE BACK OF THE GUY WHO SAVED ME.

FRIENDLY.

YEAH...

WE DON'T KNOW THESE PEOPLE. WE CAN'T JUST GO WITH THEM.

WHAT OTHER CHOICE DO WE HAVE? THIS GIVES US A CHANCE TO STAY ONE STEP AHEAD OF BARROW.

I GUESS...

ARE THEY... BUTCHERING THE BUGS?

IT LOOKS LIKE THEY USE THEIR PARTS. SMART, ACTUALLY.

THOSE WINGS PROBABLY LET THEM FLY PRETTY WELL. I SHOULD GET SOME. MIGHT NOT NEED SOMEONE TO SAVE ME NEXT TIME.

SPEAKING OF THAT...I TRIED TO FOLLOW AFTER YOU. BUT THE OTHER PASSENGERS, THEY STOPPED ME--

HEY. THERE'S NOTHING YOU COULD'VE DONE.

I WAS FINE.

YEAH.

THANKS TO HIM.

MY NAME IS LUCAS SERRANO. I RUN THE FARM NOT TOO FAR FROM HERE.

YOU'RE NOT SAFE HERE. SO WE'LL TAKE AS MANY OF YOU WITH US AS WE CAN. ONCE WE GET TO THE FARM, WE'LL CALL FOR HELP.

IF YOU DECIDE TO STAY, WE'VE LEFT FOOD THAT SHOULD LAST YOU A COUPLE DAYS.

BUT BE WARNED--YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE WORST OF THE BUGS.

THOSE COME OUT AT NIGHT.

ARE YOU INSANE? WHY ARE WE TAKING THEM WITH US?

THEY NEED OUR HELP, SERENA.

BUT-- WHAT IF THEY FIND OUT ABOUT--

I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT.

WE LEAVE IN TEN MINUTES!

I DON'T LIKE THIS.

YEAH, WELL, I LIKE IT MORE THAN ALMOST BEING EATEN.

ME TOO. BUT...

...THERE'S SOMETHING THEY'RE NOT TELLING US.

GUYS! WE'RE LOSING DAYLIGHT FAST!

WE TOOK TOO LONG! IT'S GOING TO BE DARK BEFORE WE'RE OUT OF THE FOREST!

EVERYONE! GET READY TO FIGHT!

MOSQUITOS TO THE LEFT!

TO THE RIGHT TOO!

WE'RE ALMOST THERE! JUST HOLD THEM OFF A LITTLE BIT LONGER!

THEY'RE *EVERYWHERE!*

AAAH!

THAT WAS OUR DRIVER!

THEY'RE GOING TO CRASH!

I'VE GOT IT!

WOW.

I CAN SEE THE FOREST'S EDGE!

WE'RE GOING TO MAKE IT--

OH GOD.

THEY AREN'T FOLLOWING!

WE MADE IT.

LET'S SEE BARROW FIND US NOW.

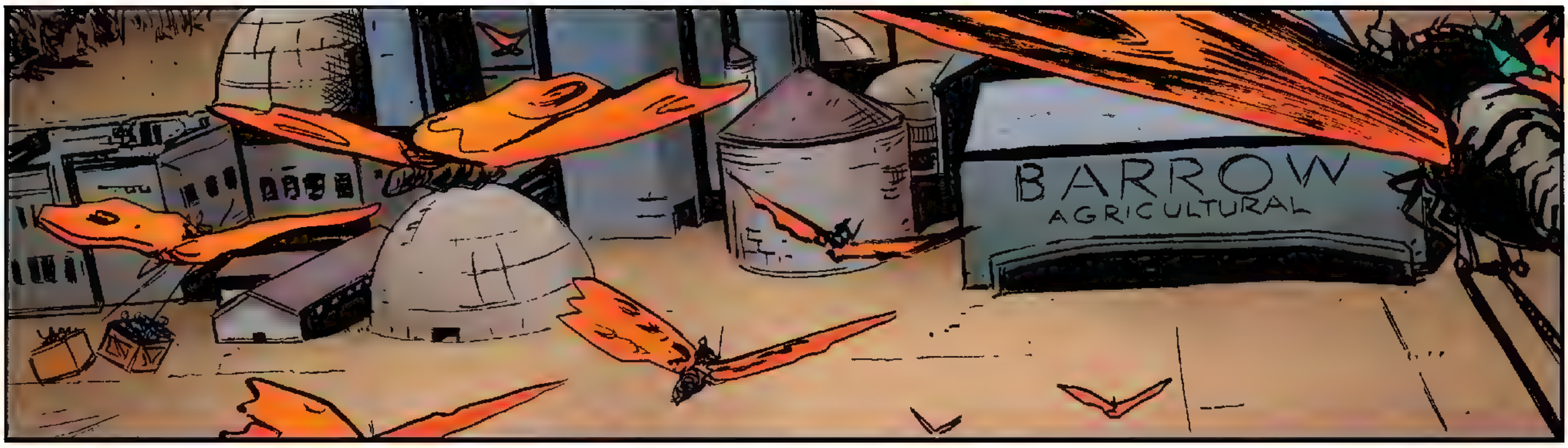
Uh... WILLA...

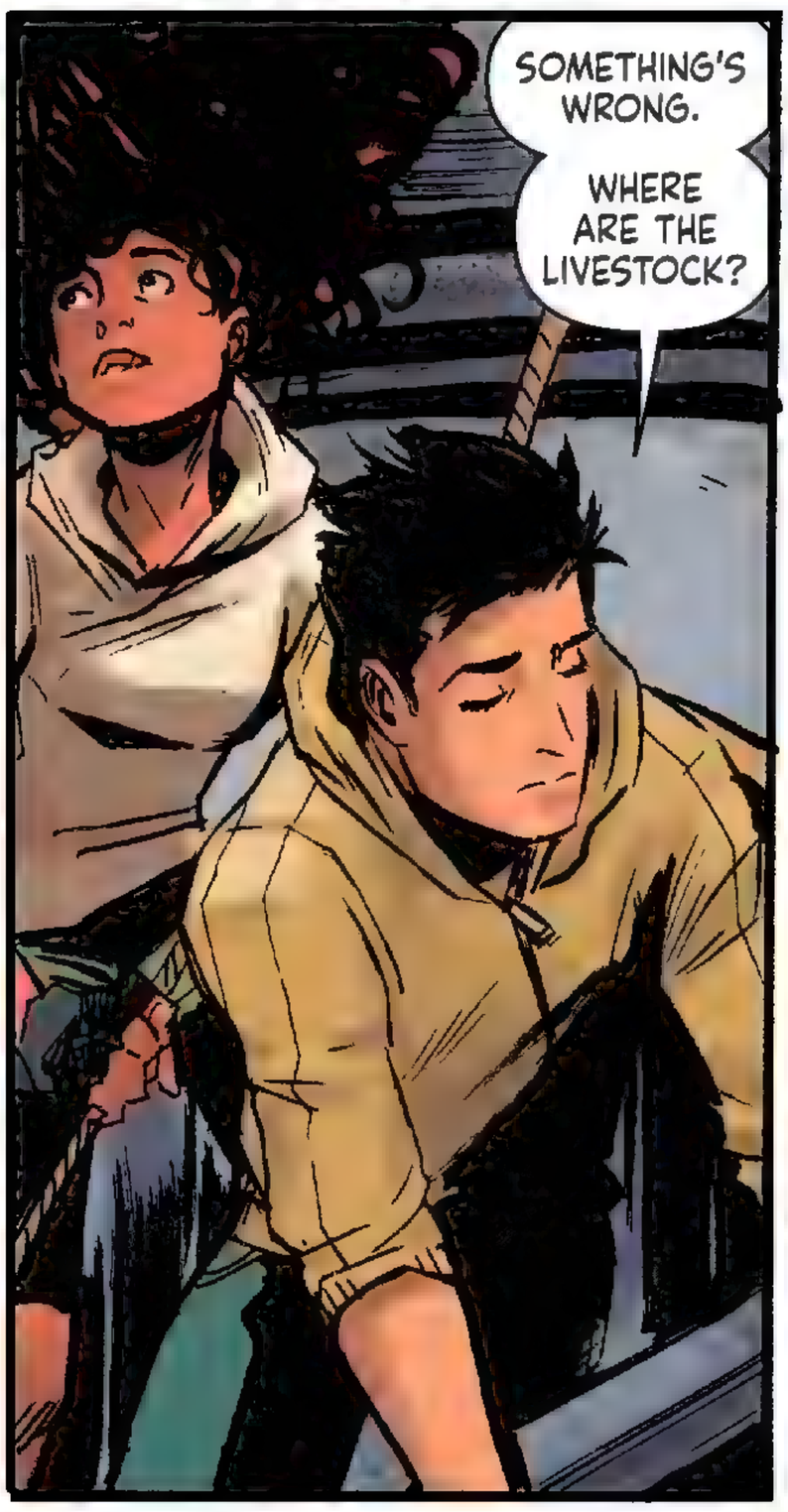
I THINK WE FORGOT TO ASK *WHO* THE FARMERS WORK FOR...

BARROW AGRICULTURAL

END CHAPTER SEVEN

CHAPTER EIGHT


BARROW
AGRICULTURAL


SOMETHING'S WRONG.
WHERE ARE THE LIVESTOCK?

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? MAYBE THEY'RE IN A DIFFERENT AREA OF THE BUILDING.
NO, I RECOGNIZE THESE GROOVES ON THE GROUND. THEY'RE USED TO TETHER THE CATTLE. THIS IS WHERE THE ANIMALS SHOULD BE.
THAT'S TRUE. THEY *SHOULD* BE HERE.

WHY AREN'T THEY?
BECAUSE THEY ALL DIED. YEARS AGO.

"BARROW WAS READY FOR G-DAY. THE LOW-G FARMS WERE UP AND RUNNING WITHIN A MONTH.

"FOR YEARS, EVERYTHING WENT PRETTY SMOOTHLY. WE HAD A NEW SENSE OF NORMALCY.

"I WAS TEN WHEN I WAS FIRST ALLOWED ONTO THE FLOOR.

"I STARTED WORKING HERE ON MY EIGHTEENTH BIRTHDAY.

"I WAS TWENTY WHEN THE BUGS CAME.

"WE BARELY SURVIVED. ALL OF OUR LIVESTOCK WAS KILLED.

"ALL THE FARMS IN THE AREA WERE HIT. IN RETROSPECT, IT WAS INEVITABLE. LIKE WE'D SET OUT GIANT BUFFETS FOR THE BUGS.

"BY THE TIME BARROW FIGURED OUT HOW TO KEEP THEM AT BAY, IT WAS TOO LATE.

"THE ORDERS CAME DOWN FROM ON HIGH--THE CITIES STILL NEEDED FOOD.

"OUR JOB WAS TO PROVIDE IT. TO FARM THE LAND.

"BUTCHER THE ANIMALS WHO FED OFF IT.

"SO WE DID."

"WAIT A SECOND."

YOU'RE SAYING I'VE EATEN BUG?

I'M SAYING IT'S THE ONLY THING YOU'VE BEEN EATING FOR YEARS.

I HAD NO IDEA...NO ONE IN THE CITY KNOWS ABOUT THIS.

WHAT OTHER SECRETS HAS BARROW BEEN KEEPING?

YOU TALK LIKE YOU KNOW ROGER BARROW PERSONALLY.

I--

LUCAS!

THIS ALL *YOUR* FAULT.

ARE YOU OKAY?

THE MAN WHO DIED TODAY...THAT WAS HER BROTHER.

I'M SORRY, I HAVE TO GO.

EVERYONE'S WELCOME TO STAY HERE AS LONG AS YOU NEED.

SO NOW WE'RE TRAPPED IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE WITH A BUNCH OF FARMERS TURNED CRAZY SURVIVALISTS.

WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

IT'S FINE. WE CAN LEAVE WHENEVER WE WANT.

NO WE CAN'T.

MY JETPACK IS IN MY LUGGAGE. WHICH, OH YEAH, IS STRANDED IN A TRAIN IN THE MIDDLE OF A BUG-INFESTED FOREST.

SO WE GO ON FOOT.

WE'VE GOT NOTHING TO STOP US IF WE GO SKYWARD.

YOU'RE OUT OF BULLETS. YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE YOUR FIRE EXTINGUISHER ANYMORE.

WE'LL STEAL A BUG.

DO *YOU* KNOW HOW TO RIDE ONE OF THOSE THINGS?

CAN'T BE TOO HARD.

AND IF YOU'RE WRONG, IT'LL EAT US.

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY?! I HAVE NO IDEA HOW WE'RE GETTING OUT OF THIS. BUT I NEED TO GET TO KANSAS CITY!

WHY? WHY DO YOU NEED TO GO TO THIS PLACE SO BAD?

WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT THAT BARROW'S WILLING TO KILL HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE JUST TO GET TO YOU?

I CAN'T TELL YOU.

YOU *CAN* TELL ME. YOU CAN EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT'S IN THAT BOOK OF YOURS. YOU JUST WON'T.

YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND--

THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH ANYMORE!

I AM OUT HERE, IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, SURVIVING BUGS AND GOD KNOWS WHAT ELSE, TO HELP YOU.

I THINK I DESERVE TO KNOW!

I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO COME WITH! YOU CAN LEAVE ANYTIME YOU WANT! SO--

HEY, REMEMBER HOW I WAS HIDING IN THE BACK OF THE TRAIN BECAUSE I'M A FUGITIVE AND PEOPLE MIGHT RECOGNIZE ME?

YEAH...

THOSE PEOPLE BEHIND YOU ARE STARING AT ME.

PROBABLY BECAUSE YOU WERE YELLING.

WE WERE YELLING.

BUT...WHAT IF IT'S BECAUSE THEY RECOGNIZE ME?

IN ALL THE INSANITY, I KINDA FORGOT TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE.

LET'S HOPE IT WAS JUST YOUR YELLING.

OUR YELLING.

LET'S LAY LOW AND GET SOME SLEEP. WE'LL FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO IN THE MORNING.

THIS CONVERSATION'S NOT OVER.

I FIGURED.

SECURE BEDDING AFTER USE

COME ON, DAD. WHAT'S IN KANSAS CITY? A SWITCH THAT TURNS GRAVITY BACK ON? A BIG RED BUTTON I NEED TO HIT?
ALL I SEE IS A LOT OF MATH.
WAIT...

COME ON, WILLA. I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT.
THIS IS STUPID. IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT DOESN'T.
THEN WHAT--

WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
THE PUZZLE IS MEANT TO TEACH YOU TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX. IT'S COOL.
IT'S NOT COOL. IT'S BORING. I WANT TO GO OUTSIDE AND FLY.

WILLA--
FINE. JUST CLOSE THE DOOR ON THE WAY OUT!

SORRY DAD.

I REALLY HOPE THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED ME TO DO. OTHERWISE I'M RUINING YOUR CRAZY BOOK FOR NO GOOD REASON.

MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE STUCK AROUND FOR YOUR DUMB BRAIN TEASERS MORE...

...OFTEN.

YOU WERE RIGHT, DAD.

THIS IS COOL.

MYSTERIOUS SYMBOL. OKAY, THAT'S A START. BUT WHAT'S IT HAVE TO DO WITH KANSAS CITY? AND HOW IS IT SUPPOSED TO HELP ME FIND--

WHACK

EVERYTHING OKAY IN HERE--?

Oh.

SORRY. DID I WAKE YOU?

NO. I--I CAN'T SLEEP.

ME EITHER.

WHY DO YOU GUYS DO IT? RISK YOUR LIVES EVERY DAY TO FEED THE CITY?

FUNNY. THAT'S A QUESTION I'VE ASKED MYSELF A LOT LATELY.

PRACTICE WITH ME?

PRACTICE FIGHTING GIANT BUGS WITH SWORDS? HELL YES.

WHEN YOU'RE FIGHTING BUGS, YOU WANT TO AIM FOR ANY WEAK POINTS--THE NECK, JOINTS.

THE WINGS ARE A GREAT TARGET. CUT ONE OFF AND THEY LOSE CONTROL.

THE KEY IS TO LAUNCH YOURSELF AT THE BUG YOU'RE ATTACKING.

IF YOU DON'T HIT IT HARD ENOUGH TO CUT STRAIGHT THROUGH...

THUNK

WHOOA!

...YOU'LL SEND YOURSELF FLYING THE OTHER DIRECTION.

WHAT IF THAT'S WHAT I *WANT?*

SHUNK

YOU'RE GOOD.

I GREW UP IN PENTHOUSES. THE HIGHEST, MOST DANGEROUS AREAS OF CHICAGO.

SO CAN WE SKIP THE REMEDIAL STUFF? I WANT YOU TO TEACH ME HOW TO USE THOSE.

DON'T LOOK, EDISON. RESPECT HER PRIVACY.

THOUGH MAYBE SHE NEEDS MY HELP AND DOESN'T REALIZE IT.

YEAH, LET'S GO WITH THAT.

HER SECRET IS LONG DIVISION?

I REMEMBER STUDYING SOME OF THIS IN SCHOOL.

GRAVITATIONAL EQUATIONS, I THINK? WHY WOULD--

MMPH!

MAN, IF I'D HAD THESE IN THE CITY...

WAIT. HOW COME THERE AREN'T ANY GIANT BUGS IN THE CITY?

BARROW FIGURED OUT A TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP THEM AT BAY.

NOT THAT HE'D SHARE IT WITH US, OF COURSE.

HOW DO *YOU* KEEP THEM AWAY?

WE CUT DOWN ALL THE TREES FOR MILES IN EVERY DIRECTION. THEY DON'T LIKE THE OPEN AIR.

BUT WHEN THEY GET REALLY HUNGRY AND DECIDE TO COME FOR US ANYWAY...

WE FIGHT FOR OUR LIVES.

WOW.

STOP IT.

THEY TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO. CAREFUL. YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW MUCH LIFT YOU GET.

THE PROBLEM WITH THEM IS THEY TAKE UP YOUR HANDS, SO YOU NEED TO LEARN HOW TO MOVE AROUND WITHOUT--

LOOK OUT--!

ARE YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE.

I...

YEAH?

I'M SORRY FOR WHAT I SAID TO YOU IN THE FOREST.

OH. THAT.

YOU MEAN ALL THAT *"PART OF YOU WAS HOPING YOU WOULDN'T MAKE IT"* STUFF?

IT'S OKAY.

I MEAN, IT WAS SUPER JUDGY. BUT I'M OVER IT.

AND MAAAAYBE YOU WERE A LITTLE BIT RIGHT. MAYBE.

HOW DID YOU KNOW? I MEAN, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW.

BECAUSE I'M GOING THROUGH SOMETHING SIMILAR.

I KINDA DOUBT THAT.

THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO DO. THE WEIGHT OF IT...THE RESPONSIBILITY. I FEEL LIKE IT'S GOING TO CRUSH ME. I KNOW I NEED TO DO IT...

BUT I ALSO WANT ANY EXCUSE NOT TO.

WHOA.

THAT'S... THAT'S EXACTLY IT.

SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME IF I TOLD YOU.

AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE SEEN...THERE ISN'T ANYTHING I WON'T BELIEVE.

I NEED TO FIX THE WORLD.

HAHAHA!
THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T TELL YOU.
I'M SORRY. I'M NOT LAUGHING AT YOU.
REALLY? FEELS LIKE YOU ARE.
NO, IT'S JUST--
MAN, WHERE DO I EVEN START?
I KNOW. IT SOUNDS ABSURD.
NOT AS ABSURD AS YOU'D THINK.
IT'S A RESPONSIBILITY I DIDN'T ASK FOR. THAT I NEVER WANTED.
DOES IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH KANSAS CITY?
WHAT? HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT--
LUCAS!
SERENA, I JUST NEED A MOMENT--
IT'S TIME.
I HAVE TO GO. WE'LL TALK MORE SOON.
SURE. YEAH. DEFINITELY.

OKAY. THAT WAS NORMAL. TOTALLY NORMAL AND NOT AT ALL WEIRDLY SEXY.

MAGNETIZE & SAVE LIVES

ANOTHER DAY WITH THOSE WINGS AND I THINK I CAN--

WAITAMINUTE--

NICE TRY, WHOEVER YOU--

HEY! *ET TU,* DUDE WHOSE LIFE I SAVED?

YOU'RE IN DANGER!

THEY KNOW WHO YOU ARE.

WHO? THE OTHER PASSENGERS?

WILLA! THEY'RE ON OUR SIDE.

THEY FIGURED OUT WHO YOU ARE. BUT THEY DON'T CARE.

THEY ALL SAW YOU SAVE ME.

NOW THEY'RE TRYING TO PROTECT US.

FROM WHO?

THE FARMERS. THEY KNOW TOO. THEY CALLED BARROW.

HE'S ON HIS WAY. HE MAY ALREADY BE HERE.

THE PASSENGERS ARE GOING TO CREATE A DIVERSION AT THE OTHER END OF THE BUILDING. BUY US SOME TIME.

THEN WHAT, WE GRAB A BUG AND HOPE FOR THE BEST?

OH GOD. THAT'S OUR PLAN.

NOW YOU WANT TO A RIDE BUG OUT OF HERE?

SEEMS LIKE A BETTER OPTION THAN CERTAIN DEATH.

"PROBABLY DEATH" INSTEAD.

I'LL TAKE IT.

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

OH. HEY. SERENA, RIGHT? WE NEVER REALLY GOT A CHANCE TO MEET. BUT WE'RE IN A BIT OF A RUSH, SO--

YOU CAN'T LEAVE.

LUCAS, LISTEN TO ME. HERE'S THE TRUTH.

I'M ON THE RUN FROM BARROW. AND ONE OF YOUR PEOPLE CALLED HIM AND TOLD HIM THAT WE'RE HERE--

I KNOW.

IT WAS ME.

IT...IT WAS?

I RECOGNIZED YOU IMMEDIATELY BACK IN THE FOREST.

YOU KNEW WHO I WAS THIS ENTIRE TIME?

WHAT HAPPENED TO FIXING THE WORLD?

REACH FOR IT. I DARE YOU.

THIS ISN'T WHAT YOU THINK.

ARE YOU SAYING BARROW ISN'T BEHIND THAT DOOR WAITING FOR ME?

HE IS. BUT--

AND YOU DIDN'T CALL HIM AND TELL HIM I WAS HERE?

I DID.

YOU DON'T KNOW BARROW. WHATEVER YOU THINK HE WILL GIVE YOU, HE WON'T--

I'M AFRAID *YOU* DON'T UNDERSTAND...

NOW WE'VE GOT HIM RIGHT WHERE WE WANT HIM.

END CHAPTER EIGHT

CHAPTER NINE

YOU BASTARD!

YOU KILLED MY DAD!

DON'T-- PLEASE--!

YOU TOOK EVERYTHING FROM ME!

AAGH!

"WILLA?"

SORRY. WHAT WERE YOU SAYING?

I WAS APOLOGIZING THAT WE USED YOU AS BAIT. BUT I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND-- IT WAS WORTH IT.

BARROW WALKED RIGHT INTO THE TRAP.

HE'S BEEN USING US FOR YEARS. PUTTING OUR LIVES AT RISK SO HE COULD MAKE MONEY. OUR BLOOD, HIS TREASURE.

NO MORE.

I THINK YOU MAY BE UNDERESTIMATING WHAT YOU'VE DONE HERE.

YOU'RE DECLARING WAR AGAINST THE CITY.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY POWERFUL AND DANGEROUS PEOPLE WILL COME DOWN ON YOU?

DO YOU MEAN YOUR FAMILY, EDISON DAVIES?

I... DO. YEAH. AMONGST OTHERS.

I GUESS YOU KNOW WHO I AM TOO.

WE DO. AND HOW DANGEROUS YOUR PARENTS ARE.

THEY'RE THE BIGGEST ARMS DEALERS IN THE UNITED STATES.

THEY ARE?

SO...ARE WE PRISONERS, TOO?

ARE YOU JOKING? WILLA'S A HERO.

WAIT, WHAT?

WORD OF YOUR ACTIONS IN THE CITY HAS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

THE WOMAN WHO FOUGHT BACK AGAINST IMPOSSIBLE ODDS.

YOU'RE AN INSPIRATION. PEOPLE WANT TO FIGHT TOO. BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU DID.

I-- WHOA.

I DON'T WANT THAT RESPONSIBILITY.

I KNOW YOU DON'T.

BUT IT'S TIME TO STOP RUNNING, WILLA.

SO WE'RE NOT PRISONERS.

IF SHE TRUSTS YOU...

THEN I DO TOO.

I DON'T.

THERE'S STILL SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW. WHY DID BARROW WANT THIS GIRL SO BADLY?

BARROW WON'T TELL US. WHAT'S THE BIG SECRET?

HE...HE KILLED MY DAD.

I DIDN'T KNOW. WILLA, I'M SO SORRY.

BUT WHY DOES BARROW WANT YOU--

ANOTHER TIME.

SO... THEY'RE INSANE. RIGHT?

RIGHT?

I DON'T KNOW.

THEY KIDNAPPED A MAN.

I KINDA DESTROYED THAT SAME MAN'S BUILDING.

THAT'S DIFFERENT. YOU WERE--

DESPERATE? SCARED? TRYING TO SAVE A FRIEND?

LOOK AT THESE PEOPLE. THEY'VE HAD TO ADAPT TO AN ***IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION.*** THEY'RE BARELY HOLDING ON OUT HERE.

THEY'RE TRYING TO SAVE ***THEMSELVES.***

MAYBE THEY NEED OUR HELP.

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.

THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. I WAS TALKING TO LUCAS LAST NIGHT. AND HE SEEMED TO KNOW ABOUT--

YOU WERE WITH HIM EARLIER? WHEN?

I COULDN'T SLEEP. SO I LOOKED AROUND. RAN INTO HIM.

HE TAUGHT ME SOME MOVES.

"SOME MOVES."

NO, I MEAN, WITH HIS SWORD--

NOT WHAT I MEANT, AND YOU KNOW IT.

I GET IT. HE'S HANDSOME.

I GUESS.

THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT. I'M NOT SOME GOOGLY-EYED GIRL GETTING SWEPT OFF HER FEET BY...

HI. LUCAS WAS WONDERING IF YOU WANTED TO HAVE DINNER TONIGHT.

JUST YOU. NOT HIM.

UH. YEAH. SURE.

DON'T.

I DON'T THINK I NEED TO.

LUCAS? THEY TOLD ME TO MEET YOU HERE FOR DINNER.

WE'LL GET TO THAT IN A BIT. FIRST...I WANTED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

CAN YOU TURN A LIGHT ON? I CAN'T SEE A THING.

TRUST ME. OKAY?

OH-- OKAY.

WHAT'S THAT? WHY'RE WE HERE?

BECAUSE IT'S FEEDING TIME.

LUCAS--!

IT'S OKAY.

IT IS NOT OKAY! I SAW ONE OF THOSE THINGS ***EAT*** SOMEONE! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

LUCAS, DON'T!

IT'S OKAY. ONLY YOUNGER FIREFLIES ARE CARNIVORES.

WHEN THEY REACH ADULTHOOD, THEY BECOME HERBIVORES.

WE'RE FEEDING THEM ***PLANTS?***

LEAD WITH THAT NEXT TIME!

GOD, WHAT DID YOU THINK WAS HAPPENING? I WAS GOING TO FEED YOU TO A BUG?

I DON'T KNOW! MAYBE START TELLING ME ***WHAT*** IS IN A ROOM BEFOREHAND FROM NOW ON!

FAIR ENOUGH.

FEED HIM. GO AHEAD.

THEY'RE... BEAUTIFUL.

I WONDER WHY THEY GLOW.

IT'S TO ATTRACT A MATE.

SO... YOU BROUGHT ME INTO A ROOM WITH GIANT, HORNY BUGS?

NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT THAT WAY...

WE'RE STUDYING THEIR BIOLUMINESCENCE. SEEING IF WE CAN REPLICATE IT FOR OUR OWN USE.

YEAH. THERE YOU GO, BIG GUY. EAT UP.

SO WHAT, YOU'RE TIRED OF LIGHTBULBS?

IF WE'RE GOING TO SURVIVE AGAINST THE CITY, WE CAN'T DEPEND ON TECHNOLOGY.

IS THAT WHY YOU BROUGHT ME HERE? TO SHOW OFF SOME WAR WEAPONS?

NO, I...

I KNOW YOU'VE SEEN A LOT OF TERRIBLE THINGS. AND I GUESS I WANTED YOU TO SEE...

MENU

THIS WORLD WE LIVE IN, AS UPSIDE DOWN AS IT IS, CAN BE BEAUTIFUL IN ITS OWN WAY TOO.

BUT...WE STILL HAVE TO FIX IT. DON'T WE?

WE DO. AND IT WON'T BE EASY. BUT...

BUT WE NEED TO GO SOMEWHERE ELSE FIRST. AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S IN THE ROOM THIS TIME.

WHAT?

WINE.

HOW DOES IT FEEL? BEING ON THE OTHER END OF IT?

IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK THIS IS? A CUTE LITTLE ROLE REVERSAL?

I WONDER HOW CUTE YOU'LL THINK FIFTY THOUSAND VOLTS TO THE CROTCH IS.

WHY ARE YOU GIVING EVERYTHING UP FOR THIS WOMAN?

I'M NOT GIVING UP ANYTHING. I DON'T NEED MY FAMILY. OR THEIR MONEY.

TASER

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN.

WAIT. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S TRYING TO DO, DO YOU?

HAHAHA! ***THAT'S*** WHY YOU'RE HERE!

OH, THIS IS RICH. THIS IS REALLY, REALLY RICH.

WE'RE HERE BECAUSE WE'RE RUNNING AWAY FROM YOU.

BUT WHERE ARE YOU RUNNING ***TO?***

DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S IN THAT BOOK OF HERS?

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

OH, IT MATTERS. SHE'S TRYING TO ***CRIPPLE*** YOU. SHE WANTS TO PUT YOU BACK IN THAT CHAIR OF YOURS.

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

SHE WANTS TO BRING ***GRAVITY*** BACK. AND YOU'RE HELPING HER DO IT!

THAT'S... THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE.

IS IT?

WHY DO YOU THINK I'VE DONE ALL OF THIS? WHY ***ELSE*** WOULD I?

WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE HERE, EDISON.

THAT'S NOT TRUE.

IF SHE SUCCEEDS, I LOSE A LOT. MONEY, POWER, INFLUENCE.

BUT YOU LOSE SO MUCH MORE.

SO THIS IS WHAT THE GOOD STUFF TASTES LIKE.

WOW.

ROAST CHICKEN

MAIN

YOU GUYS HAVE IT PRETTY GOOD OUT HERE FOR FARMERS.

WELL, IT'S NOT NORMALLY LIKE THIS. THIS IS A BIT OF A GOING-AWAY FEAST.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE MAKING A STAND HERE.

NO. WE'RE GOING TO TAKE THE FIGHT TO CHICAGO.

YOU'RE... GOING TO ATTACK THE CITY?

FOR TOO LONG, WE'VE DIED SO THAT THE PEOPLE IN THE CITIES COULD GET FAT. NO MORE.

WE NEED TO FIX THE WORLD, WILLA.

I KNOW. BUT...ISN'T THERE A BETTER WAY? WHAT ABOUT KANSAS CITY?

THAT WAS AN...UNFORTUNATE MISTAKE. A LEARNING EXPERIENCE. WE--

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, *"MISTAKE"*?

WE DIDN'T MEAN FOR THAT MANY PEOPLE TO DIE.

LUCAS, WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

BUT... I THOUGHT YOU KNEW?

WHAT HAPPENED IN KANSAS CITY?

"TWO DAYS AGO, WE SNUCK INTO ONE OF BARROW'S BUILDINGS.

BARROW

"WE WERE TRYING TO FIGHT BACK. THE PROBLEM IS ALL THE CITIES HAVE BEEN EQUIPPED WITH TECH TO KEEP THE BUGS AT BAY.

"IF WE COULD TURN IT OFF, THEY'D BE COMPLETELY UNPREPARED. WE COULD RIDE IN THERE AND SIMPLY ***TAKE*** THE CITY.

"WE'D FINALLY BE FREE.

"BUT...INSTEAD OF TURNING IT OFF, WE JUST SCREWED UP THE SIGNAL. SOMEHOW...

"I THINK WE REVERSED IT.

"INSTEAD OF KEEPING THE BUGS AWAY...

"WE ***CALLED*** THEM."

"HOW MANY PEOPLE DIED, LUCAS?"

"I'M NOT SURE. BUT... I THINK...

"...ALL OF THEM."

HOW COULD YOU?

IT WAS A MISTAKE. BELIEVE ME. I...

I CAN STILL HEAR THE SCREAMS. I'LL ALWAYS BE ABLE TO, I THINK.

I WAS HEADED TO KANSAS CITY. ON THAT TRAIN. NO ONE KNEW...

YOU'RE LUCKY BARROW STOPPED THE TRAIN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE FOUND.

MY GOD. ALL THOSE PEOPLE...

WHY ***WERE*** YOU GOING TO KANSAS CITY?

WHAT DID YOU THINK I WAS TALKING ABOUT?

A DIFFERENT WAY TO FIX THINGS. AND NOW, MORE THAN EVER...I NEED TO GO THERE.

TO STOP ALL OF THIS.

WHATEVER YOU THINK YOU CAN DO THERE... THAT'S GONE NOW. THE CITY'S DESTROYED.

COME WITH ME INSTEAD. HELP ME DO IT RIGHT THIS TIME.

HELP ME TAKE CHICAGO.

HAVEN'T YOU LEARNED ANYTHING FROM WHAT YOU DID?

YOU DESTROYED AN ENTIRE CITY!

AND I WON'T MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN. THAT'S WHY BARROW'S SO IMPORTANT. HE KNOWS HOW ALL THE TECH WORKS.

ONCE HE TELLS US--AND WE'LL ***MAKE*** HIM TELL US--WE CAN CRIPPLE THE CITY BEFORE WE GET THERE.

WE'RE GOING TO TURN OFF ALL THE TECH. NO SIGNAL THAT KEEPS THE BUGS AWAY...

...AND NO MAGNETIZATION.

EXACTLY.

BUT...PEOPLE DEPEND ON THAT TO KEEP THEM FROM GOING SKYWARD. THEY'LL BE HELPLESS.

SO MANY PEOPLE WILL DIE.

ONLY THE RICH.

THE ONES WHO HAVE KEPT YOU AND I UNDER THEIR THUMBS. OPPRESSING US FOR THEIR OWN GAIN.

THE ONES WHO KILLED YOUR DAD.

DON'T YOU WANT TO GET REVENGE?

AAGH!

YOU TOOK EVERYTHING FROM ME!

I WANT REVENGE ON BARROW. NOT THE CITY.

BARROW'S JUST A PART OF THE SICKNESS. IF HE DIES TOMORROW, ANOTHER WILL TAKE HIS PLACE.

AND THEY WILL KILL SOMEONE ELSE'S FATHER. AND GET AWAY WITH IT.

I GREW UP IN THE HIGHEST PARTS OF CHICAGO. WHERE A SINGLE WRONG STEP MEANT DEATH.

IT WASN'T EVER SCARY TO ME. BECAUSE THAT WAS THE ONLY REALITY I KNEW.

HONESTLY? I LOVED IT.

THEN, I WENT TO THE STREETS. SAW HOW THE RICH LIVE. WHAT IT MUST FEEL LIKE TO BE...SAFE.

I DON'T THINK I EVER REALIZED THAT WAS AN OPTION. FEELING *"SAFE."*

BUT EVEN THEN...I DIDN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND. UNTIL MY DAD DIED.

TO SAVE ME.

THAT'S WHAT I'M RUNNING FROM. THAT HE DIED FOR NOTHING.

HE DIDN'T HAVE TO. FIGHT WITH ME.

WITH *US.*

NO MORE RUNNING?

NO MORE RUNNING.

"WE'VE GOT TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE."

I JUST HAD THE MOST INSANE CONVERSATION OF MY LIFE.

YOU DON'T SAY.

YOU WERE RIGHT. THEY'RE CRAZY. LIKE ***CRAZYPANTS*** CRAZY.

WILLA, I KNOW--

NO, YOU DON'T.

THEY'RE GOING TO ATTACK CHICAGO.

WHAT?

THEY'RE GOING TO TORTURE BARROW UNTIL THEY FIND OUT HOW TO SHUT DOWN ALL THE TECH.

AND THEN THEY'RE GOING TO FLY IN ON THEIR BUGS AND TAKE IT OVER.

OH, AND THEY DESTROYED KANSAS CITY A COUPLE DAYS AGO.

IS THAT WINE ON YOUR BREATH?

YES. IT IS. BUT I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH.

IF HE TOLD YOU ALL OF THAT... WHY'D HE LET YOU GO?

I CONVINCED HIM I'M ON THEIR SIDE.

"CONVINCED HIM," HUH?

WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU LATELY?

IT'S LIKE YOU'RE JEALOUS OR--

OH.

OH.

IS THAT WHY YOU'VE BEEN SO WEIRD LATELY?

IT DOESN'T MATTER. THERE ARE BIGGER ISSUES TO DEAL WITH NOW.

MY FAMILY'S IN DANGER.

I MEAN, I HATE MY PARENTS. AND MOST OF MY SIBLINGS. SO IT'S TEMPTING TO JUST LET IT HAPPEN...

EDISON!

I JOKE WHEN I'M TERRIFIED. SORRY.

MAYBE WE CAN GET WORD TO THEM. OR SHIRLEY. OR--

OR WE STOP IT RIGHT NOW.

HOW DO WE DO THAT?

WE TAKE AWAY THEIR WEAPON.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M SAYING THIS, BUT...

"WE NEED TO RESCUE ROGER BARROW."

END CHAPTER NINE

CHAPTER TEN

I'M THINKING ABOUT ASKING STAN OUT.

STAN-IN-MEAT-PROCESSING STAN?

YEAH. WHY?

I HEARD HE'S GOT A BUG... THING.

WHAT'S THAT MEAN? A *"BUG THING"*?

YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

HOW WOULD HE EVEN--

I MEAN, IT'S ALL EXO-SKELETON.

NOT ***ALL*** OF IT.

GROSS! NOW THAT'S IN MY HEAD.

I LITERALLY JUST PICTURED IT. I CAN'T ***NOT*** PICTURE IT NOW.

I'M JUST SAYING. IT'S POSSIBLE.

AND ***I'M*** JUST SAYING, MAKING ME THINK ABOUT THAT IS COMPLETE--

CRAP!

BUG IN THE BUILDING!

ALERT! *ALERT! THERE'S A BUG LOOSE!*

YOU'RE SURE IT WON'T EAT ANYBODY?

YEAH, IT'S A VEGAN FIREFLY NOW. WE'RE GOOD.

THAT IS THE WEIRDEST THING I'VE HEARD ON THIS ENTIRE WEIRD TRIP.

GET READY TO HEAR SOMETHING EVEN WEIRDER.

ROGER BARROW.

YOU COMPLETE GARBAGE OF A HUMAN BEING.

WE'RE HERE TO RESCUE YOU.

GLAD YOU TWO CAME TO YOUR SENSES.

THERE IS NO COMING TO ANY SENSES.

YOU'RE BAD. WHAT LUCAS PLANS TO DO IS WORSE.

AND WHAT ABOUT *YOUR* PLAN, WILLA?

ALL I WANT TO DO IS STOP A WAR.

LET'S JUST GET MOVING.

OF COURSE. LEAD THE WAY.

I KNEW YOU COULDN'T BE TRUSTED.

TIE HIM BACK UP. *NOW.*

I CAN'T DO THAT.

YOU KNOW WHAT LUCAS HAS PLANNED. YOU KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DIE.

IT'S WHAT WE NEED TO DO!

OTHERWISE... WHAT WE'VE SACRIFICED WON'T BE WORTH IT.

DO YOU MEAN WHAT HAPPENED IN KANSAS CITY?

LUCAS TOLD YOU ABOUT THAT? GOD, HE TURNS INTO AN IDIOT THE SECOND HE SEES A PRETTY FACE.

SCREW KANSAS CITY. THEY GOT WHAT THEY DESERVED. I MEAN MY *BROTHER.*

WHO DIED SAVING *YOU* IN THE FOREST.

I GET IT. YOU WANT HIS DEATH TO MEAN SOMETHING. YOU NEED IT TO.

I FELT THE SAME WAY. WITH MY DAD. BUT YOU KNOW WHAT? EVERYTHING I'VE DONE...I WASN'T DOING IT FOR HIM.

I WAS DOING IT FOR ME. AND MAYBE--

BLAH BLAH BLAH. NOTHING YOU SAY IS GOING TO--

YOUR BROTHER IS DEAD BECAUSE OF YOU.

SHUT YOUR MOUTH.

YEAH, MAN--

IT'S TRUE. YOU STUPID FARMERS WOULDN'T STAY IN YOUR PLACE. AND NOW HE'S DEAD.

YOU KILLED HIM. *YOU.*

I DIDN'T...

DO YOU PLAN TO HAVE ALL YOUR FRIENDS' BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS TOO? WHEN THEY ALL DIE ATTACKING THE CITY?

BECAUSE TRUST ME WHEN I SAY--THEY WILL ALL DIE.

EVERY. LAST. ONE.

AND IT WILL BE YOUR FAULT.

SO EITHER KILL ME, OR GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY.

I...

ARE YOU TWO COMING OR WHAT?

NEXT STEPS. THEY HAVE THE JETPACK I USED TO GET HERE. IF WE FIND IT--

YOU'RE NOT IN CHARGE. WE ARE.

AND WHAT EXACTLY IS ***YOUR*** PLAN?

THE FARMERS ARE SENDING THE PEOPLE FROM THE TRAIN TO CHICAGO WITH THE NEXT FOOD SHIPMENT.

YOU KNOW, THE PEOPLE ***YOU*** STRANDED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOREST TO DIE.

WE'RE GOING TO SMUGGLE YOU OUT WITH THEM. IF THEY DON'T HAVE YOU, THEY CAN'T ATTACK THE CITY.

PROBLEM IS, THE TRAIN IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BUILDING.

LOTS OF CHECKPOINTS TO GET THROUGH.

UNLESS WE TAKE A SHORTCUT.

GET IN.

"*N*"? I MOST CERTAINLY WILL NOT--

DO I REALLY NEED TO GO IN TOO?

EVERYONE KNOWS WHO YOU ARE. YOU'RE KINDA FAMOUS HERE.

I FEEL LIKE FAMOUS PEOPLE DON'T USUALLY CLIMB INTO BUGS' STOMACHS--

EDISON!

I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU.

WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

I...

I'M STILL AMAZED ABOUT THE WHOLE *"EATING BUGS"* THING. I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. HAD TO CHECK OUT THE PROCESS FOR MYSELF.

THERE'S SO MUCH YOU CITY FOLK DON'T UNDERSTAND.

CLEARLY.

ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW? ARE THERE GIANT WORMS? PLEASE TELL ME THERE AREN'T GIANT WORMS.

NOT AS FAR AS I'VE SEEN.

BUT THERE *IS* SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH YOU.

SOMEWHERE A LITTLE MORE... PRIVATE.

...OF COURSE.

APPARENTLY ONE OF THE FIREFLIES GOT LOOSE.

IS THAT WHAT ALL THE YELLING WAS ABOUT?

YEP. THEY ROUNDED IT UP, BUT SCARED THE HELL OUT OF--

AAAH!

OH MY GOD! THANK YOU!

THAT BUG ATE US, BUT YOU ***SAVED*** OUR LIVES!

OUR ***HEROES!***

HEURRRGH!

...YES. OUR HEROES.

ANYWAY, GOTTA GO! THANKS!

WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?

I WAS GOING TO DISTRACT THEM WHILE EDISON SNUCK YOU PAST. BUT NOW...

HOW DID YOU EVER BEAT ME?

SHUT UP. I'M THINKING...

I GET IT. MY FAMILY SELLS WEAPONS IN THE CITY.

YOU WANT TO CONVINCE ME TO TURN ON THEM, RIGHT?

I CAN'T IMAGINE YOU'D EVER BETRAY YOUR FAMILY, EDISON.

EVEN IF THEY'VE BEEN AS TERRIBLE TO YOU AS I IMAGINE THEY HAVE.

THEN WHY THE MYSTERIOUS CONVERSATION?

I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT WILLA.

OH.

WAIT, IS THIS LIKE A BRO-CODE CONVERSATION? BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING BETWEEN WILLA AND I.

REALLY?

YEAH. DEFINITELY.

SO YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY, RISKED YOUR LIFE FOR... WHAT? A GOOD FRIEND?

YOU MUST'VE KNOWN HER YOUR ENTIRE LIFE.

WE MET A COUPLE MONTHS AGO.

SHE SAVED MY LIFE. I OWE HER.

NOW THAT I GET.

GOOD. BECAUSE...SHE'S REALLY QUITE SOMETHING.

THAT WE AGREE ON.

WHAT IF I'D SAID NO? WERE YOU GOING TO LOCK ME UP WITH BARROW AND THROW AWAY THE KEY?

...NO.

THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A JOKE. UNTIL YOU MADE IT WEIRD.

I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOU, EDISON DAVIES.

YOUR FAMILY CONNECTION IS... TROUBLING.

NO LOVE LOST. THEY'RE ALL TOTAL A-HOLES.

SO YOU'D HAPPILY LET THEM DIE IF IT CAME TO IT?

OF COURSE NOT.

BUT WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU CAN'T GET THE CODES FROM BARROW?

MAYBE IT WOULDN'T BE THE WORST THING IF THIS WHOLE *"WAR"* THING WENT AWAY--

WE ALREADY GOT THE CODES FROM HIM.

WHAT? YOU DID?

SO THAT MEANS...

"...YOU DON'T NEED BARROW ANYMORE."

W-WILLA FOWLER?

THAT'S RIGHT...

YOU'VE BEEN SUCH AN INSPIRATION TO ME!

WHAT YOU DID IN CHICAGO WAS ***AMAZING!***

THANK YOU, BUT...

...I HAD TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST THOSE RICH SNOBS, YOU KNOW?

DAMN RIGHT.

IS THAT ROGER BARROW?

THAT'S RIGHT. LUCAS WANTS TO SEND HIM BACK TO THE CITY.

I... REALLY?

I'LL NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE TO CONFIRM THAT.

WHAT, YOU THINK I'M HELPING THE GUY WHO KILLED MY DAD ESCAPE?

NO, I-- OF COURSE NOT.

GO RIGHT ALONG.

THANKS.

I DIDN'T KILL HIM.

YOU DID.

IS THAT, LIKE, THE ONLY TRICK YOU HAVE?

WHAT?

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING. TRYING TO GET INTO MY HEAD LIKE YOU DID WITH SERENA.

THERE'S JUST ONE TINY PROBLEM WITH THAT.

I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU DIDN'T KILL MY DAD.

BUT I DIDN'T EITHER. HE ***SACRIFICED*** HIMSELF. BECAUSE HE LOVED ME.

AND GIVING YOU A SINGLE SHRED OF CREDIT FOR WHAT HE DID TAKES AWAY FROM THAT.

SOMETHING YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND--

OH NO.

HOW DID YOU GET BARROW TO TALK?

WE HAD A RATHER...FORCEFUL CONVERSATION.

SO THERE'S NOTHING STOPPING YOU FROM ATTACKING CHICAGO NOW--

NOTHING. AT ALL.

I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS.

YOU DON'T HAVE A CHOICE.

POOR RICH BOY EDISON DAVIES. NO FANCY WEAPONS TO DEFEND HIMSELF.

HERE'S THE THING. YOU'RE USED TO FIGHTING BUGS.

I'M USED TO FIGHTING *PEOPLE.*

PEOPLE WHO ARE DESPERATE.

WHO WILL DO ANYTHING TO SURVIVE.

ALSO I HAD THE MOST EXPENSIVE JIU JITSU INSTRUCTORS MONEY COULD BUY.

WELL...

...I HAVE A WEAPON...

...YOU DON'T.

LEGS.

THAT'S A LOW BLOW-- *AAGH!*

LUCAS, LOOK.

REALLY? THAT'S YOUR MOVE?

SOMETHING SCARY BEHIND ME?

NO. *LOOK.*

WE--WE NEED TO HELP EVERYONE!

DO YOU HAVE A FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEM? OR--

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THAT'S YOUR *HOME!*

NOT ANYMORE.

WAIT...*YOU* DID THIS, DIDN'T YOU? YOU SET THE FIRE.

THERE'S NO TURNING BACK NOW. WE HAVE TO GO TO THE CITY.

YOU'RE CRAZY! YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN THE PEOPLE YOU CLAIM TO BE FIGHTING.

EVEN MY FAMILY WOULDN'T DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

I'M DOING WHAT I *HAVE* TO. YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND--

LUCAS!

YOU NEED TO STOP.

EVERYTHING'S SET, WILLA. WE HAVE THE CODES. WE HAVE THE ARMY.

TOGETHER, WE CAN GET YOUR REVENGE.

I DON'T WANT IT.

YOU'RE NOT FIXING THE WORLD, LUCAS. YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO TAKE IT FOR YOURSELF.

DON'T I DESERVE IT? AFTER ALL I'VE LOST?!

EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN TAKEN FROM ME?!

NO. YOU DON'T.

WILLA, DON'T MAKE ME DO THIS!

I WON'T.

GAAAH!

THAT SHOULD HOLD LUCAS OFF FOR A BIT. BUT NOW WE NEED TO GET TO THE TRANSPORT BEFORE IT LEAVES.

WHY? I'M NOT GOING BACK TO CHICAGO. AND IT SOUNDS LIKE BARROW'S USELESS NOW.

JUST TRUST ME.

YOU WANT TO FLY *INTO* THE FIRE?

THAT'S RIGHT.

THE TRANSPORT'S LEAVING!

ALSO, I THINK I'M ON FIRE!

WHERE'S ROGER BARROW?

HE--HE LEFT. RIGHT AFTER YOU DID.

OH NO.

WE'RE TOO LATE.

TOO LATE FOR WHAT?

WHAT DON'T I KNOW, EDISON?

WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE. IT'S TOO DANGEROUS--

WHAT DON'T I KNOW?

BARROW TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR PLAN TO BRING BACK GRAVITY.

OH.

I'M SORRY, EDISON. I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. BUT...I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT HAS TO DO WITH--

I GAVE BARROW YOUR DAD'S BOOK. TO STOP YOU.

YOU WHAT? HOW COULD YOU?

ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT WAS MYSELF. AND WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU SUCCEEDED...WHAT I'D LOSE...

BUT NOW, THERE'S NO STOPPING LUCAS FROM ATTACKING CHICAGO. EXCEPT...

BRINGING GRAVITY BACK.

THAT'S RIGHT.

I SCREWED EVERYTHING UP, WILLA.

NO. NOT YET.

I CAN BEAT HIM TO KANSAS CITY.

I'LL GO WITH YOU.

NO.

I'M SORRY, WILLA. BUT YOU'VE GOT TO LET ME HELP--

I WILL.

BUY ME TIME. GET TO CHICAGO AHEAD OF LUCAS. PREPARE THE CITY.

OKAY. YEAH, I CAN DO THAT.

I'M SO SORRY.

ME TOO. I SHOULD'VE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

I WOULD HAVE TRIED TO STOP YOU.

I DOUBT THAT.

I'M NOT SURE HOW TO GET THERE FASTER.

I HAVE AN IDEA.

BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE BUG. HOW'RE YOU GOING TO GET TO KANSAS CITY?

ON FOOT.

THAT'S SUICIDE. WILLA--

WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICE.

"LUCAS STILL NEEDS TO ASSEMBLE HIS ARMY. THAT'LL BUY YOU SOME TIME.

"IF YOU DON'T GET EATEN ALONG THE WAY, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET THERE AHEAD OF THEM.

"AS FOR ME, BARROW HAS A HEAD START. BUT HE'S JUST ONE MAN.

"AND HE'S OUT THERE, ON HIS OWN. HE'S NOT USED TO BEING ON HIS OWN.

"I AM.

"THAT'S WHY WE'RE GOING TO WIN. WE'RE NOT ON OUR OWN. I'VE GOT YOU.

"AND JOAN AND SHIRLEY IN THE CITY.

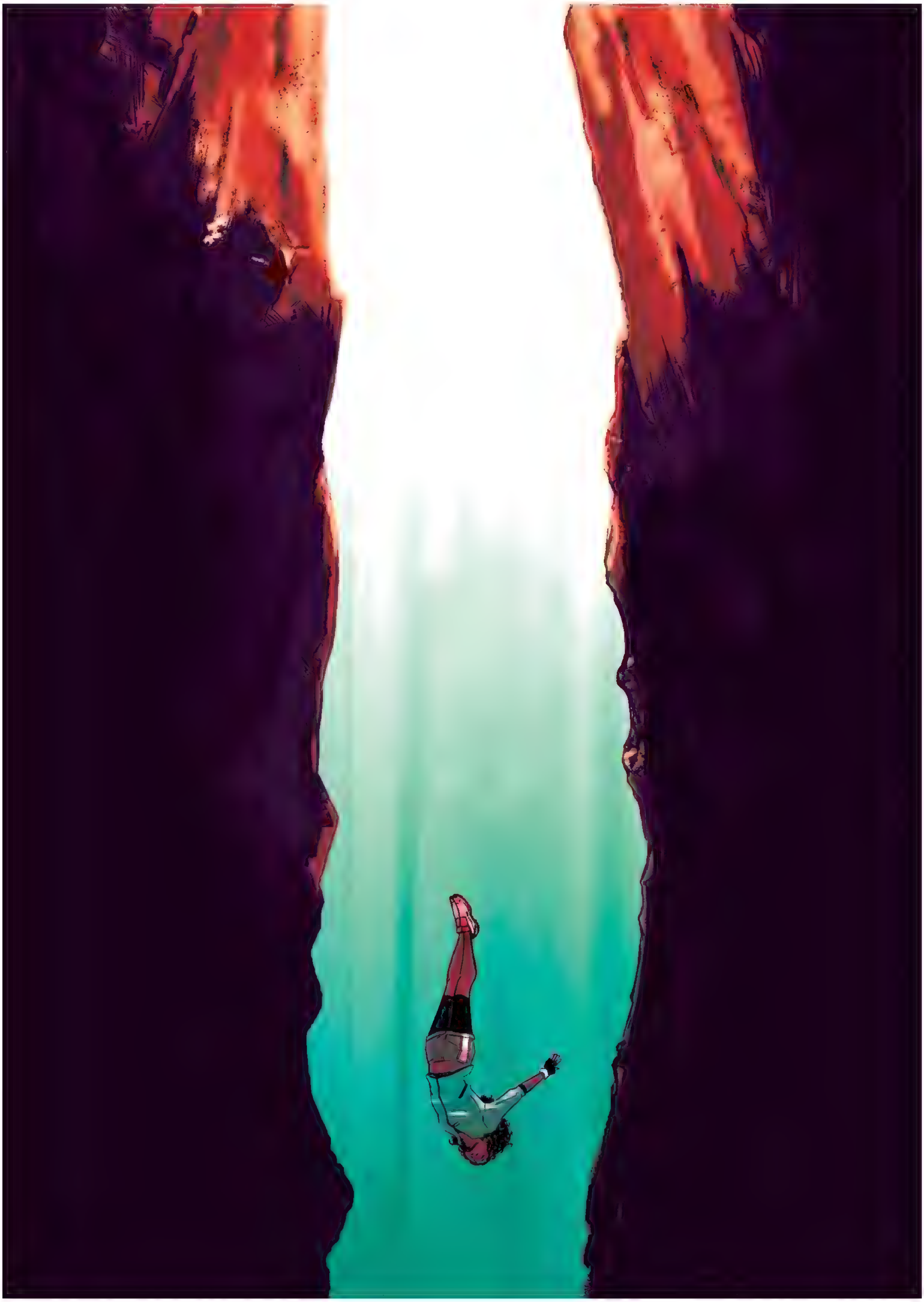
"I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED.

"THE PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT MOST."

WILLA.

MY SWEET BABY GIRL...I'M COMING FOR YOU.

END CHAPTER TEN



CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE SKY *KILLS.*

IT'S DRILLED INTO YOUR HEAD AT A VERY YOUNG AGE. AND IT'S TRUE.

ONE WRONG STEP...

AND YOU'RE SCREWED.

THAT'S WHY PEOPLE MOVED TO CITIES. TO MAKE SURE THERE WAS AT LEAST *SOMETHING* ABOVE THEIR HEADS.

SOMETHING TO GRAB ONTO.

BUT EVEN IF YOU DON'T END UP GOING COMPLETELY SKYWARD, THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE SAFE.

THERE'S STILL THE LANDING. LOW GRAVITY OR NO, IF YOU'RE FALLING WITH A LOT OF MOMENTUM...

...YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE YOU LAND ON YOUR FEET.

GAAH!

GET OFF GET OFF GET OFF!

GOD I MISS MY GUN.

ALL RIGHT. SO I'M RACING AN EVIL DUDE TO KANSAS CITY.

HE HAS A JETPACK, AND I HAVE THE ABILITY TO JUST BARELY STAY NOT DEAD.

PRETTY SAFE TO SAY THAT BEATING HIM THERE IS OUT OF THE QUESTION.

THE ONLY WAY TO WIN NOW IS TO FIGURE OUT ***WHERE*** IN KANSAS CITY WE NEED TO GET TO FIRST.

MY DAD CLAIMED HE COULD FIX THE WORLD. AND HE HID A CODED TREASURE MAP IN HIS OLD JOURNAL THAT LAID OUT WHERE TO GO TO DO IT.

BARROW HAS THAT JOURNAL NOW, BUT BEFORE HE TOOK IT, I FIGURED OUT THE CODE. AND IT GAVE ME...

WHATEVER ***THIS*** IS. IS IT A WISHBONE? "Y" MARKS THE SPOT?

DOES IT LOOK LIKE LADYPARTS? IT LOOKS LIKE LADYPARTS.

MAYBE I REMEMBERED IT WRONG. OR PUT THE PUZZLE TOGETHER WRONG.

OR I JUST HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT I'M DOING.

WELL, GOTTA KEEP MOVING FORWARD.

AND HOPE EDISON'S HAVING BETTER LUCK THAN I AM.

SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT: AN ARMY OF FARMERS, RIDING GIANT BUGS, IS HEADED FOR CHICAGO. AND THEY WANT TO TAKE THE CITY BY FORCE.

BUT IT'S OKAY, BECAUSE WILLA'S GOING TO BRING GRAVITY BACK.

WE JUST NEED TO BUY HER TIME.

THAT...YEAH, THAT PRETTY MUCH SUMS IT UP.

I NEED YOUR HELP, JOAN.

OKAY. SURE. YEAH.

I KNOW THIS IS A LOT TO TAKE IN...

HEY...

MAYBE MY GIRLFRIEND CAN HELP.

YOU'RE DATING SOMEONE? THAT'S AWESOME!

HOW COULD SHE HELP?

KAREN'S A COP.

FUNNY STORY, ACTUALLY. I MET HER WHEN I WAS HELPING WILLA ESCAPE FROM BARROW.

NEVER TOLD HER THAT PART OF THE STORY. BUT I GUESS NOW'S AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN *"NOW"*...

EDISON DAVIES, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST...

THIS ISN'T WHAT YOU THINK...

I *THINK* YOU SOUND ABSOLUTELY CRAZY.

AND THAT MY GIRLFRIEND HAS BEEN LYING TO ME.

I TRIED TO TELL YOU...!

YOU SAID YOU HAD A SECRET! I FIGURED IT WAS AN EX-GIRLFRIEND! NOT THAT YOU WORKED WITH TERRORISTS!

I'M NOT A TERRORIST. AND I'M NOT CRAZY.

AND I CAN PROVE IT.

CAN I JUST REACH INTO THIS BAG?

I'D REALLY RATHER YOU DIDN'T.

CAN *YOU* REACH INTO IT? ANYONE, REALLY. TRUST ME, IT'LL EXPLAIN A LOT.

WHAT... WHAT'S IN HERE? I--

AAAH!

GIANT BUGS. LIKE I SAID.

I HAD A FEELING PROOF MIGHT COME IN HANDY.

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE...

OR... EVERYTHING I SAID IS TRUE. AND CHICAGO'S IN DEEP TROUBLE.

YOU'RE GOING TO KNOW SOON ENOUGH. THE ARMY'S LESS THAN A DAY AWAY, I THINK.

TAKE THE HEAD.

I AM NOT TOUCHING IT. AGAIN. EVER.

TAKE IT. SHOW IT TO YOUR FELLOW OFFICERS. GET THEM READY. OKAY?

I--OKAY. YEAH, OKAY.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

I NEED YOU TO FIND WHEREVER SHIRLEY'S HIDING.

I'M GOING TO NEED ROCKET MESSENGERS FOR THIS TO WORK.

AND WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO?

SOMETHING I'VE BEEN DREADING. I NEED TO GO MAKE A DEAL WITH THE WORST PEOPLE IN CHICAGO.

MY PARENTS.

OKAY. KANSAS CITY, NOW ALL POST-APOCALYPTIC.

THE BUGS THAT DID THIS HAVE GONE AT LEAST.

DON'T THINK ABOUT WHY. THE FACT THAT IT MEANS THEY ATE EVERYONE--

GAH! WHAT PART OF *"DON'T THINK"* DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, BRAIN?!

I'LL START DOWNTOWN. MAYBE MY DAD HAD AN OFFICE HERE, AND THAT WAS THE LOGO FOR THE CORPORATION.

IT'S SOMEWHERE TO START, AT LEAST.

HOW NICE. MY VULTURE FRIENDS FOLLOWED ME FOR MORAL SUPPORT.

JERKS.

THEY BUILT A TIERED NETTING SYSTEM IN THEIR CITY! WHAT A COOL IDEA.

I MEAN, *I* WOULDN'T WANT IT. IT'D REALLY SLOW YOU DOWN. BUT IF YOU WANTED TO BE SAFE...

EXCEPT FROM BUGS, I GUESS...

THIS IS MY TENTH BUILDING. STILL NO LOGOS THAT MATCH--

CRRREAK

HELLO? ANYONE THERE?

BARROW? YOU OUT THERE WAITING TO KILL ME?

NO WAY.

SUGAR.

SWEET, SWEET SUGAR. MY OLD FRIEND!

OH MY GOD I FORGOT HOW HUNGRY I WAS.

OKAY. THAT HELPED. BUT STILL NOTHING...

WAITAMINUTE...

WILLA...

NOPE.

NOPE.

DUMB IDEA. WHY WOULD IT BE A STREET INTERSECTION?

THAT'S NOT A GOOD TREASURE MAP IF THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF THEM SOMEWHERE.

UNLESS THERE WAS ONE ***GIANT*** INTERSECTION, BUT THAT WOULD BE...

WAIT...

THIS IS REALLY, REALLY STUPID...

HA! GOTCHA THIS TIME!

SO LET'S SEE. I...

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

"Y" MARKS THE SPOT.

WE'RE EVEN NOW!

THAT MUST'VE BEEN A RIVER. I WONDER WHAT THAT WAS LIKE...WATER JUST SITTING ON THE GROUND.

SOUNDS CREEPY.

A LITTLE ON THE NOSE WITH THE BURIED TREASURE OF IT ALL, DAD--

WHAT THE HELL?

THANKS FOR LEADING ME HERE.

I WAS ABLE TO DECIPHER YOUR FATHER'S SIMPLISTIC CODE IN A MATTER OF SECONDS. BUT THE SYMBOL'S MEANING ELUDED ME.

I KNEW IT MUST BE SOMETHING ONLY YOU'D RECOGNIZE.

JOKE'S ON YOU. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT IT WAS. I FIGURED IT OUT.

WHO'S THE SMART ONE NOW? HEY, DID YOU HANDCUFF ME TO YOU SO THAT I CAN DO ***ALL*** THE HARD WORK FOR YOU?

IF YOU WERE AS SMART AS YOU THINK YOU ARE, YOU'D NOTICE I DIDN'T CUFF YOU TO ME.

HUH? THEN WHAT--

GOODBYE, WILLA FOWLER.

KLIK

COME ON!

OH GOD GIANT RIVER WALL OKAY *OKAY--*

COME--

--ON--

NOW JUST GOTTA AVOID THE BUILDINGS AND--

OOOF!

ALL RIGHT. LET'S FINALLY PUT AN END TO--

GAH!

OOF!

YOU BIG, STUPID JERK! I AM SO TIRED OF YOUR SMUG FACE--

NO WAY. WE FOUND IT.

IT REALLY *IS* A BIG RED BUTTON.

GET OUT OF MY WAY!

I CAN'T LET YOU DESTROY IT!

I CAN'T LET YOU RUIN MY LIFE'S WORK!

PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DIE IF WE DON'T PUSH THAT BUTTON!

I. DON'T. CARE!

I KNOW! THAT'S WHY I'M TRYING TO STOP YOU! I--

=AHEM=

DO YOU MIND? WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING HERE.

NO--!

THANKS, WEIRD STRANGER.

BUT WHY'RE WE STILL FLOATING?

MAYBE IT DIDN'T WORK...?

FSSSS

IT WORKED. FOLLOW ME.

FASCINATING.

"FASCINATING"? ALL I SEE IS A CREEPY HOLE IN THE GROUND.

I'M NOT GOING DOWN THERE.

UNGH. I'M TOTALLY GOING DOWN THERE.

WE'VE GOT TO BE HUNDREDS OF FEET UNDERGROUND BY NOW. AND THE QUALITY OF TUNNELING...

THIS IS MILITARY WORK. I'M SURE OF IT.

EXCUSE ME, MYSTERIOUS PERSON! WHO ARE YOU AND WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US?

HELLO?

NOT VERY CHATTY, IS HE?

YEAH...THIS ISN'T A BONDING MOMENT BETWEEN US.

NO NEED TO BE *RUDE.*

WHAT THE...?

PLASTIC GRASS? WHERE IN THE HELL ARE WE?

THIS IS HOW NATE FOWLER PLANNED TO FIX THE WORLD.

WELCOME...

"...TO THE UNDERGROUND CITY OF CRYSTAL SPRINGS."

I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

THERE WAS NO WAY TO FIX GRAVITY. YOUR DAD REALIZED THAT EARLY ON.

BUT THERE WAS A WAY TO PUT A CEILING OVER OUR HEADS. TO PROTECT FROM THE DEADLY SKY.

HAHAHA!

THIS WAS NATE'S WAY TO FIX THE WORLD? YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME! WHAT A JOKE!

I KNEW NATE WAS CRAZY, BUT I DIDN'T REALIZE HE WAS *CRAZY!*

SO EVERYTHING I DID...IT WAS FOR NOTHING.

WAIT... HOW DID YOU KNOW NATE FOWLER WAS MY DAD?

"WAS"? I'D HEARD RUMORS, BUT...HE'S DEAD?

YEAH. DID YOU KNOW HIM OR SOMETHING?

WELL, THAT'S THE THING...

HI, BABY GIRL. IT'S ME.

MOM.

I HAVE A LOT TO EXPLAIN...

END CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHAPTER TWELVE

TWENTY-ONE YEARS AGO

HONEY, I'M SO PROUD OF YOU.

REALLY? BECAUSE THE INTERNET IS CALLING ME A CRAZY PERSON.

AND WE BOTH KNOW THE INTERNET IS ALWAYS RIGHT.

YOU BELIEVE ME, RIGHT?

WHAT I ***BELIEVE*** IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS SPENDING INSANE AMOUNTS OF MONEY TO BRING YOUR VISION TO LIFE. CRAZY OR NOT...

THAT'S PRETTY AWESOME.

YEAH. I GUESS IT IS.

CRYSTAL SPRINGS. THE FIRST UNDERGROUND CITY. IF IT WORKS, WE CAN HAVE ONE UNDER EVERY MAJOR CITY WITHIN THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS.

WHICH, ACCORDING TO MY LATEST CALCULATIONS, IS THE EARLIEST THE GRAVITATIONAL EVENT SHOULD--

NO MORE DEPRESSING APOCALYPSE-THAT-MAY-NEVER-HAPPEN TALK THIS WEEK. WE MADE A DEAL.

I KNOW.

BUT...?

YOU NEED TO MAKE ME A PROMISE. IF IT HAPPENS EARLIER THAN I'VE CALCULATED, AND WE'RE NOT TOGETHER...

...YOU NEED TO GO TO THE UNDERGROUND CITY.

COME ON, NATE. YOU KNOW I DON'T--

IT WILL BE CHAOS. AND OUR ONLY CHANCE OF GETTING BACK TOGETHER-- OUR FAMILY GETTING BACK TOGETHER--IS MEETING THERE.

I NEED YOU TO PROMISE.

I--I PROMISE.

G-DAY

LILLY!

NATE! WHAT'S HAPPENING?! THIS--THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!

I--I THINK I CAN MAKE IT--

LILLY!

AAAH!

OOOF!

WHAT AM I--?

MINE! THIS IS MINE!

THERE'S ROOM FOR BOTH OF US! JUST LET ME--

NO I CAN'T DIE I'M SORRY BUT I CAN'T--

I'M SORRY BUT I NEED TO LIVE--

SHELLZ
GOTCHA!

OH GOD. NATE WAS RIGHT. HE WAS ACTUALLY RIGHT. WHAT DO I DO?! I--
GRRRR.

GOOD DOG. NICE DOG.
LISTEN, I DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE. I'M BARELY HOLDING ON AS IS.
AND I'M PRETTY SURE I HAVE A LONG WALK AHEAD OF ME. SO I'M JUST GOING TO GO THE OTHER WAY AND LEAVE YOU ALONE. OKAY?

Drive In
:WHIMPER:

OH, COME ON! I CAN'T TAKE YOU WITH ME.

I KNOW. I WANT TO GO BACK TO CHICAGO TOO. BUT I MADE A PROMISE. TO MEET MY HUSBAND IN AN UNDERGROUND CITY.

YEAH, I THOUGHT IT SOUNDED PRETTY SILLY TOO. UNTIL PEOPLE STARTED FLOATING IN THE AIR.

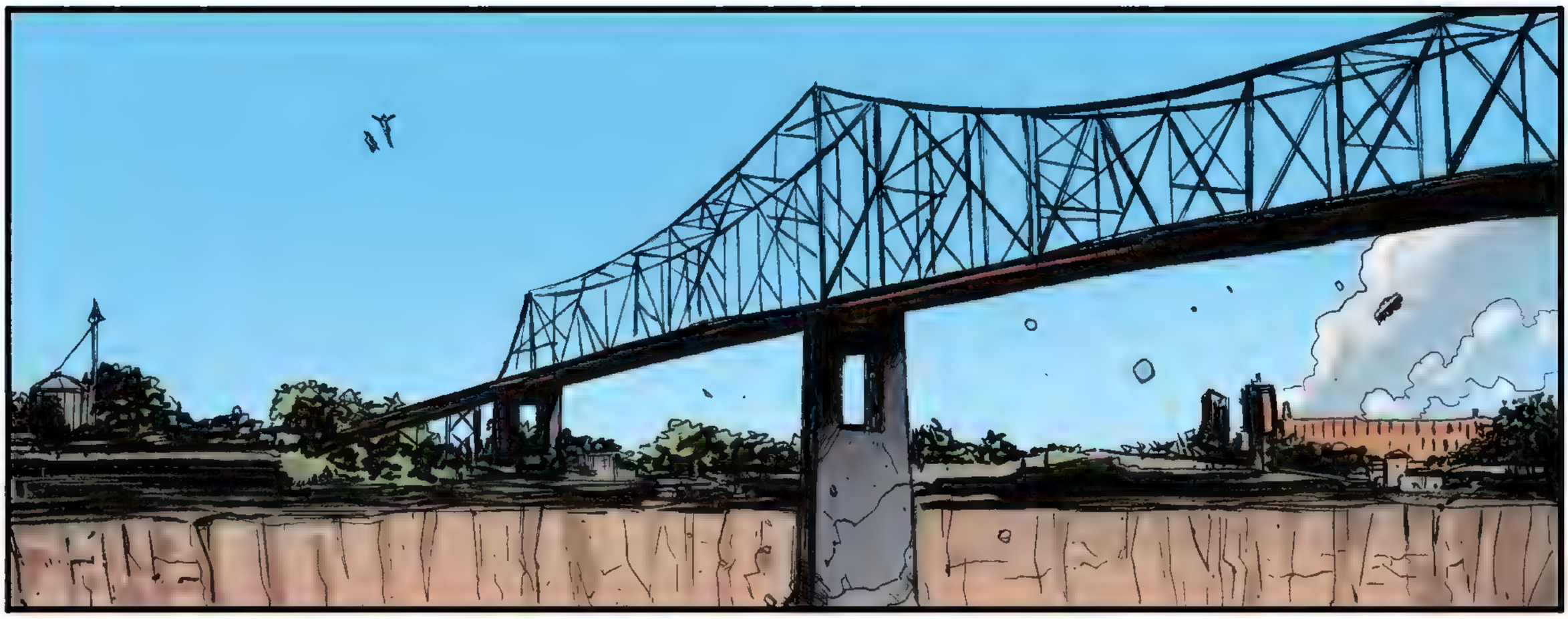
NOW IT'S MY BEST CHANCE TO SEE HIM AGAIN. AND MY BABY GIRL. IF THEY'RE ALIVE...

CAN'T THINK LIKE THAT. THEY'RE ALIVE. THEY HAVE TO BE.

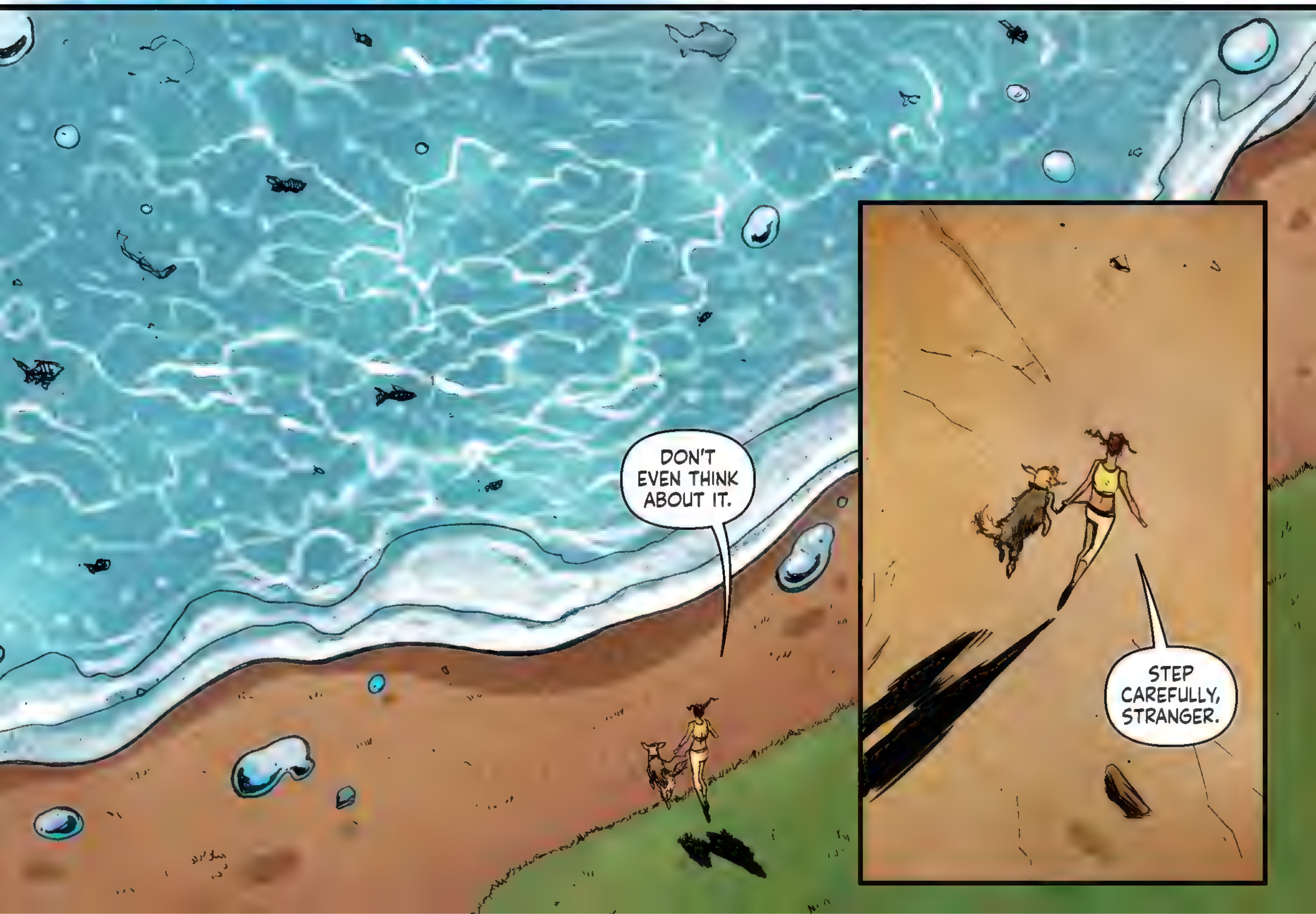
THOSE PEOPLE ARE HEADED TO THE CITY. WE'RE GOING A DIFFERENT WAY.

NO STRANGERS FOR US. I MEAN, EXCEPT YOU, STRANGER.

OH GOD. I JUST NAMED YOU, DIDN'T I?



WHO'S A GOOD BOY?


DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT.
STEP CAREFULLY, STRANGER.

QUICK. BEFORE ANYONE SEES US.

ALL RIGHT, HERE GOES NOTHING--

WHO ARE YOU?! HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE?!

HEY! RELAX! I'M A FRIEND!

PUT THE GUN DOWN. WON'T IT JUST SEND YOU FLYING BACK ANYWAY?

I MEAN, I'M STILL FIGURING OUT HOW THINGS WORK, BUT I'M PRETTY SURE THAT'S--

NO ONE'S SUPPOSED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE! WHO ARE YOU?!

I'M NATE FOWLER'S WIFE!

I--SORRY. OKAY. COME ON IN.

IS HE HERE YET?

YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON FROM THE OUTSIDE WHO'S COME.

NINETEEN YEARS AGO

YOU SHOULD CHOOSE SOME FURNITURE. WE HAVE A WHOLE STORAGE AREA FILLED WITH THE DARN STUFF.

THANKS RANDY, BUT... I WANT TO WAIT UNTIL NATE GETS HERE.

EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO

Crystal

RANDY... THIS IS NICE.

IT IS, ISN'T IT?

SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO

I--I CAN'T.

IT'S OKAY. I UNDERSTAND.

TEN YEARS AGO

I LOVE YOU SO MUCH, LILLY.

FIVE YEARS AGO

DON'T YOU DARE LEAVE ME TOO, YOU LOUSY MONGREL.

THREE DAYS AGO

HAVE A GREAT DAY, HONEY.

YOU TOO. DON'T STRESS OUT TOO MUCH.

OVER RUNNING AN UNDERGROUND CITY? WHY WOULD I EVER DO THAT?

WHAT'S THE CITY COUNCIL BOTHERING YOU ABOUT THIS TIME, MR. MAYOR?

LOTS OF DECISIONS TO MAKE ABOUT ALL THE EMPTY NEIGHBOR-HOODS.

PEOPLE ARE ARGUING TO LET OUTSIDERS IN?

NOTHING QUITE AS CRAZY AS THAT, THANKFULLY.

BUT THERE'S AN ARGUMENT TO BE MADE THAT IT COULD BE CONVERTED INTO MORE FARMLAND.

WE HAVE SO MUCH SPACE DOWN HERE. CRYSTAL SPRINGS WAS DESIGNED TO HOLD A HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE, AND INSTEAD IT'S JUST FILLED WITH THE PEOPLE WHO WERE WORKING HERE AT THE TIME.

THAT'S BARELY A THOUSAND ***PERIOD.***

A THOUSAND AND ONE.

THE CAMPOLONGOS HAD THEIR BABY LAST NIGHT.

I'M JUST SAYING--

I HAVE TO GO TO WORK. HAVE A GREAT DAY, SWEETIE.

GOOD MORNING, DANIEL!

GREAT WORK WITH THE SKY ON THE NORTH SIDE! I SWORE ONE OF THE BIRDS YOU PAINTED FLAPPED ITS WINGS.

YOU'RE TOO KIND, LILLY.

BUT NEXT TIME...

I'M NOT GOING TO ADD IN A KILLER MOON WITH A MEAN FACE. NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU ASK.

YOU RUIN ALL MY FUN. YOU KNOW THAT?

PART OF THE JOB.

IS IT WEIRD THAT I MISS IT?

MISS WHAT?

THE REAL SKY. THE OPEN AIR.

I KNOW IT CAN KILL US NOW, AND I DON'T HAVE ANY INTEREST IN GOING BACK OUT THERE, BUT...

NEVER MIND. WE BOTH KNOW TALK LIKE THAT COULD GET YOU IN TROUBLE DOWN HERE. SO IF YOU DON'T MIND...

I WON'T TELL ANYONE.

AND DON'T WORRY. I MISS IT TOO.

--SCRWAWK--

STOP IT! YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG! YOU'RE SCREWING UP THE SIGNAL!

NO *YOU* ARE! I'M THE ONE THAT GOT IT WORKING LAST NIGHT.

YOU WERE IMAGINING THINGS. THERE'S NO WAY YOU'RE GOING TO GET A SIGNAL DOWN HERE--

SHUT UP! I GOT IT!

--EARLY REPORTS ARE POSITIVE--

--TRAIN IS UP AND RUNNING--

WHOA! THEY HAVE A TRAIN UP AND RUNNING!

WHAT'S A TRAIN?

DON'T YOU KNOW ANYTHING? TRAINS USED TO BE ALL OVER THE WORLD!

REALLY? WHAT'D THEY DO?

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?

THEY'RE ROOMS THAT TEACH YOU STUFF. *TRAIN* YOU. DOWNLOAD IT RIGHT INTO YOUR BRAIN.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

OH YEAH? I GOT THE RADIO WORKING, DIDN'T I?

CHILDREN.

YOU KNOW THAT RADIOS ARE BANNED.

CONTACT WITH THE WORLD ABOVE IS *FORBIDDEN.*

SORRY, MRS. FOWLER.

BUT *WHY* IS IT FORBIDDEN?

BECAUSE THOSE ARE THE RULES.

RULES YOUR *BOYFRIEND* MADE.

THAT'S TRUE. HE DID.

AND WHEN YOU GROW UP AND BECOME MAYOR, YOU CAN MAKE ALL NEW RULES.

IS IT REALLY THAT BAD UP THERE? NO ONE'LL EVER TELL US ANYTHING.

BEFORE G-DAY, IT WASN'T. IT WAS LIKE DOWN HERE.

WELL, EXCEPT IT WASN'T ALWAYS BLUE SKIES. SOMETIMES IT'D BE CLOUDY. AND SOMETIMES...

THERE WOULD BE--I'M NOT SURE HOW TO EXPLAIN IT. AIR MOISTURE WOULD COLLECT IN THE SKY AND CREATE CLOUDS.

LIKE MR. RIVERS PAINTS ON THE CEILING, EXCEPT THEY WOULD MOVE.

AND SOMETIMES, WHEN IT GOT REALLY COLD... SNOW WOULD FALL FROM THEM. IT WAS...

...NEVER MIND. I THINK I'VE SAID PLENTY. GIVE ME THE RADIO. I WON'T TELL ANYONE.

THIS TIME.

I'M SORRY FOR WHAT I SAID EARLIER. I JUST... SOMETIMES, I FEEL LIKE WE'RE ***TRAPPED*** IN HERE.

LIKE WE'RE ***PRISONERS.***

YOU'RE ***SAFE.*** THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.

--ACT OF TERRORISM IN CHICAGO--

SEE? IT'S NOT JUST THE SKY THAT'S DANGEROUS.

--IDENTIFIED AS WILLA FOWLER--

ARE YOU OKAY, MRS. FOWLER?

OH, IS SHE A RELATIVE OF YOURS?

--IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION-- LEAD TO HER ARREST--

MRS. FOWLER?

I NEED TO GO OUTSIDE.

Uh, LILLY. WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A CITY COUNCIL MEETING.

AND IT'S FORBIDDEN--

MY DAUGHTER'S ALIVE!

HOW-- HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY KNOW THAT?

I HEARD IT ON THE RADIO. WHICH, YES, I KNOW--THEY'RE FORBIDDEN. GO AHEAD AND FINE ME.

BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE SHE'S IN ***DANGER.***

LILLY, WHAT DID IT SAY?

...THAT SHE BLEW UP A BUILDING.

OH GREAT. I HOPE YOU BRING HER BACK HERE WHILE YOU'RE AT IT. A TERRORIST IS JUST WHAT WE NEED.

SHE'S MY ***DAUGHTER.***

LILLY, I'M SORRY, BUT WE HAVE RULES--

THE RULES ***WE*** MADE UP. WHICH MEANS WE CAN UN-MAKE THEM.

IF PEOPLE ON THE OUTSIDE KNEW ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE HERE, THEY COULD TRY TO TAKE IT FROM US. TAKE ***EVERYTHING*** FROM US.

THE RULES KEEP US ***SAFE.***

THEY'VE KEPT US ***HIDING.*** LIKE RATS. LIKE ***COWARDS.***

I'M SORRY, LILLY. THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.

OH
GOD.

IT HAPPENED THIS AFTERNOON.

YOU KNEW?

WHAT I ***KNEW*** IS THAT YOU'D LEAVE THE CITY REGARDLESS OF WHAT WE SAID. SO I WANTED TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU WERE GETTING YOURSELF INTO.

I KEEP TABS ON THE OUTSIDE WORLD FROM TIME TO TIME. AS MAYOR, I HAVE TO. I'M SORRY I'VE NEVER TOLD YOU.

I HAVE A RADIO. I CHECKED IT. I...I WAS LISTENING AS IT HAPPENED. IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST. I COULD HEAR THEM SCREAMING...

PLEASE DON'T GO OUT THERE, LILLY. IT'S EVEN WORSE THAN I COULD HAVE IMAGINED.

YOU KNOW I HAVE TO.

MY DAUGHTER'S ***ALIVE,*** RANDY. AND SHE'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. SHE NEEDS ME.

I'VE TRIED TO KEEP TRACK OF WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON OUT THERE. IF YOU'RE GOING TO CHICAGO, THERE'S A FARM YOU CAN STOP AT ON THE WAY.

AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, IT'S THE ONLY THING BETWEEN HERE AND THE CITY.

THANK YOU, RANDY.

I JUST WISH... I WISH I COULD GO WITH YOU. I WISH I WASN'T SO AFRAID.

THIS IS ***EVERYTHING.*** THANK YOU.

"I WAS ABLE TO LAY LOW."

MOST OF THE BUGS HAD ALREADY...

...GORGED THEMSELVES ON THE CITY. THEY DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE ME AS I SLIPPED OUT. I GOT TO THE FARM JUST AS IT STARTED TO BURN. AND THEN...

I SAW YOU. FLYING AROUND LIKE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ANGEL I'D EVER SEEN.

I KNEW YOU WERE MY BABY GIRL IMMEDIATELY.

WILLA, IN ALL MY TIME HERE, IF I'D EVER ***THOUGHT*** THERE WAS A CHANCE YOU WERE ALIVE--

MOM, I DON'T CARE.

YOU'RE ALIVE. YOU'RE ***ALIVE!***

THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.

YES, YES, WHAT A LOVELY HAPPY ENDING.

BUT NOW THAT I KNOW NONE OF THIS IS A THREAT TO THE BUSINESS EMPIRE I'VE GROWN RATHER FOND OF...I'LL BE GOING NOW.

WAIT. I NEED TO GO WITH YOU.

WILLA, WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT--?

BARROW CAN HELP PROTECT CHICAGO. HE'S OUR ONLY SHOT NOW. MAYBE WE CAN STILL DO SOMETHING BEFORE--

ARE YOU OKAY?!

I'M-- I'M FINE.

WHERE'S BARROW? DID HE DO THAT?

ME? WHY WOULD I DO THAT? I DON'T WANT ANY PART OF THIS BIZARRE UNDERGROUND CULT.

I DID IT.

RANDY?! WHAT DID YOU DO?

PROTECTED US.

YOUR DAUGHTER IS SAFE NOW, LILLY. WE ALL ARE. WHERE WE BELONG.

NO, I NEED TO GET TO CHICAGO. THEY'LL DIE WITHOUT OUR HELP--

ARE YOU SAYING WE'RE ***TRAPPED*** DOWN HERE? IN THIS SAD, CREEPY LITTLE UNDERGROUND SUBURBIA?

THAT WAS THE ONLY DOOR. I'M SORRY, WILLA. BUT HE'S RIGHT.

THERE'S NO WAY OUT OF HERE.

END CHAPTER TWELVE

CHAPTER

THIRTEEN

YOU LIVED HERE. ALL THESE YEARS.

THAT'S RIGHT.

IT'S NICE, MOM.

YEAH. IT REALLY IS.

HEY, SORRY ABOUT THE WHOLE *"BLOWING UP THE DOOR OUTSIDE"* THING.

TOO SOON, RANDY. TOO SOON.

HE SEEMS LIKE A GOOD GUY.

HE IS. AND HE MEANT WELL. EVERYONE HERE DOES.

THEY'RE ALL JUST SO... AFRAID.

I GET IT.

HAS ANYONE EVER DONE THAT BEFORE?

I CAN GENUINELY SAY, NO...

GRAAH!

"NO ONE'S EVER TRIED TO PUNCH THE SUN."

I KNOW IT'S NOT THE REAL SUN.

BUT ISN'T IT... YOU KNOW? HOT?

OH YEAH. IT'S HOT AS BLAZES.

GOOD. HE'S GOT A LITTLE PAIN COMING TO HIM.

AAAH!

I DON'T TRUST ROGER.

SEEING AS HOW HE'S TRIED TO KILL ME MULTIPLE TIMES, I AGREE WITH YOU.

IT'S OKAY.

IT MOST CERTAINLY IS NOT.

WE NEED HIM. ROGER BARROW IS OUR ONLY CHANCE TO SAVE CHICAGO NOW.

ARE EITHER OF YOU GOING TO TRY AND HELP FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE?

WHY, WHEN YOU'RE DOING SUCH A GREAT JOB ON YOUR OWN?

I WANTED TO GET CLOSE, SEE IF THERE WERE DUCTS OR VENTING SYSTEMS WE COULD SLIP THROUGH.

THERE WEREN'T.

AND YOU NEEDED TO PUNCH IT JUST TO MAKE SURE?

WHAT? NO, THAT'S ABSURD. I PUNCHED IT BECAUSE I WAS ANGRY AND IT FELT GOOD.

AT THE TIME.

THERE'S A WAY OUT OF HERE. WE JUST NEED TO FIND IT.

Flota

THERE ISN'T A WAY OUT. I'VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE.

YEP. WE SURE DO. SO LET'S START ACTUALLY LOOKING, INSTEAD OF PUNCHING SHINY THINGS.

THAT'S CLEARLY NOT THE CASE.

ROGER BARROW. STILL AS CONDESCENDING AS EVER. WHAT MY HUSBAND EVER SAW IN YOU...

HE SAW A PEER. A MENTAL EQUAL. SOMEONE WHO COULD CHALLENGE HIM.

AND APPARENTLY, SOMEONE WHO HAD MORE FAITH IN HIM THAN YOU DO.

THAT'S IT--

HEY! STOP, MOM!

NATE FOWLER WAS A LOT OF THINGS... BUT NOT SLOPPY. AT LEAST NOT WHEN HE DESIGNED THIS PLACE.

THERE'S NO WAY SOMEONE THAT BRILLIANT DIDN'T CREATE A FAIL-SAFE.

AND YOU! STOP...SAYING NICE THINGS ABOUT MY DAD?

MAN, HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO MAKE EVEN COMPLIMENTS BAD?

HE'S RIGHT.

OF COURSE I AM.

NATE MUST HAVE HIDDEN ANOTHER WAY OUT SOMEWHERE.

WE NEED TO FIND IT.

I THINK YOU SHOULD CHECK THE SUN AGAIN. JUST TO BE SURE.

SHUT UP.

--TRUST ME, THE MONEY WE CAN MAKE OFF THIS DEAL IS INSANE.

EVEN AFTER YOUR LATEST... TROUBLES...THE DAVIES BRAND WILL BE STRONGER THAN EVER.

WHAT TROUBLES?

I DIDN'T MEAN...I WOULD NEVER BRING UP...

EDISON.

IS THAT YOUR SON'S NAME? I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW--

WHAT. IS. THIS?!

A PEACE OFFERING.

MOM. DAD. LONG TIME NO HATE.

HOW *DARE* YOU COME HERE! YOU'VE DRAGGED OUR NAME THROUGH THE MUD!

I'M PRETTY SURE YOU GUYS DRAGGED OUR NAME THROUGH THE MUD JUST FINE ON YOUR OWN.

OR ARE YOU NO LONGER *ARMS DEALERS* AND DIDN'T TELL ME?

WE'RE ASSOCIATED WITH TERRORISM NOW! YOU'VE RUINED OUR FAMILY! OUR *BRAND!*

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA--

JONATHAN.

YOU CAN STOP TALKING NOW.

EDISON. I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE ALIVE.

THANKS, MOM.

GOSSIP MOVES QUICKLY HERE. SOMEONE WILL LET THE POLICE KNOW OUR NE'ER-DO-WELL SON HAS ARRIVED.

OF COURSE.

I DIDN'T RAISE AN IDIOT. A FRUSTRATING, ARROGANT, SANCTIMONIOUS CHILD, SURE.

BUT NOT AN IDIOT.

NO, YOU ONLY MARRIED ONE.

HEY--

SO WHY DID YOU RISK YOUR FREEDOM TO COME HERE?

I NEED TO KNOW WHERE ROGER BARROW'S MAIN POWER GRID IS LOCATED.

WHY WOULD I KNOW THAT? BARROW IS A COMPETITOR. THAT WOULD BE--

INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE? AND WE BOTH KNOW YOU WOULDN'T DO THAT.

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR GAMES. THERE'S A BOMB IN THIS WHEELCHAIR.

TELL ME WHERE IT IS OR I'LL BLOW THIS PLACE UP.

HAHAHA!

OH, EDISON. I NEEDED A GOOD LAUGH. THANK YOU.

I MISS THAT SOUND. I REALLY DO. IT'S BEEN TOO LONG.

CHICAGO'S IN TERRIBLE DANGER, MOM. I NEED YOU TO BELIEVE ME.

WHY, IS THAT GIRLFRIEND OF YOURS GOING TO DESTROY ANOTHER BUILDING?

SHE'S NOT MY GIRLFRIEND. AND SHE'S TRYING TO SAVE US. FROM THE FARMERS.

THIS IS GOING TO BE A LOT TO EXPLAIN, BUT--

WAIT. YOU ALREADY KNOW THEY'RE COMING, DON'T YOU?

I'VE HEARD RUMORS.

THEY'RE TRUE. AND I NEED YOUR HELP.

OR-- COME WITH US.

EXCUSE ME? *"COME WITH US"* WHERE?

WE'RE BOOKED ON A TRAIN TO NEW YORK. WE'RE LEAVING TONIGHT.

YOU'RE RUNNING. AND LEAVING EVERYONE TO DIE.

WE'RE SURVIVING. LIKE WE ALWAYS DO. AND YOU CAN SURVIVE WITH US.

I HAVE A TICKET FOR YOU. I'VE BEEN HOLDING ON TO IT JUST IN CASE.

I KNOW YOU, MOM. THERE'S NO TICKET.

IT'S JUST AN EASY BLUFF BECAUSE YOU KNOW I WON'T COME.

THERE'S MY SON. ALWAYS SMARTER THAN EVERYONE ELSE.

I'LL GET YOU THE LOCATION. BUT EDISON...

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE A MOTHER'S LOVE.

I CONVINCED THE CITY COUNCIL THAT YOU AREN'T A THREAT.

REALLY? BECAUSE I DON'T SEE A WELCOME WAGON. OR ***ANY*** KIND OF WELCOME.

YOU'RE THE FIRST OUTSIDERS WE'VE HAD SINCE G-DAY. AND, WELL, WILLA...

WHAT?

EVERYONE THINKS YOU'RE A TERRORIST. THEY HEARD ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED IN CHICAGO.

GREAT. AT THE FARM, I WAS A FOLK HERO. HERE, I'M A MONSTER.

YOU ***DID*** DESTROY MY FAVORITE BUILDING.

NO ONE GAVE YOU PERMISSION TO TALK.

ONCE THEY GET TO KNOW YOU, IT'LL BE FINE--

WHO ARE ***YOU?***

SOMEONE NEEDS TO DEFEND CRYSTAL SPRINGS FROM INVADERS!

HI, MRS. FOWLER.

CHILDREN, THIS IS MY ***DAUGHTER*** WILLA. SHE'S NOT AN INVADER.

HI. I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU GUYS.

ARE YOU GOING TO EAT US?

WHO TOLD YOU I'D EAT YOU?

I DID NOT! I SAID ***SOME*** PEOPLE FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD EAT PEOPLE! SHE MIGHT NOT!

NO ONE EATS ANYONE IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING SOMEONE WHO EATS PEOPLE WOULD SAY.

WELL, THIS IS A WONDERFUL WASTE OF TIME.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?!

RELAX. IT JUST TAKES A SECOND.

WHAT DOES?

WHOA.

ARE WE DONE TALKING TO CHILDREN AND STARING AT PRETTY LIGHTS YET?

NO. WE'RE NOT.

YOU KIDS PROBABLY EXPLORE EVERY NOOK OF THIS TOWN, DON'T YOU?

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN ANOTHER WAY OUT OF HERE?

NO.

IS THERE A PLACE YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO GO WHERE IT COULD BE HIDDEN?

YOU MEAN LIKE THE HAUNTED HOUSE?

NO, NOT LIKE THE--

WILL YOU TELL US WHERE IT IS?

GREAT. WE'RE CHASING GHOST STORIES. BY THE TIME WE GET OUT OF HERE, WE'LL BE THE GHOSTS.

WHY IS THIS HOUSE SO NEGLECTED? IT'S IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYTHING.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO FIND ANYTHING THERE. THIS HOUSE ISN'T HAUNTED.

OBVIOUSLY.

MOM, WHAT'S WRONG?

THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE *OUR* HOME. YOU, ME, AND...YOUR DAD.

NATE HAD IT BUILT FOR OUR FAMILY. I ASKED THAT IT BE LEFT EMPTY. I COULDN'T BEAR FOR ANYONE TO BE IN IT.

HEY! DID YOU HEAR HER? LIKE THE PART WHERE SHE SAID SHE CAN'T BEAR FOR ANYONE TO BE IN IT?

DID *YOU* HEAR HER? NATE HAD IT BUILT. FOR YOUR *FAMILY.*

THIS IS WHERE THE EXIT WILL BE.

MOM...YOU DON'T NEED TO COME IN HERE.

I THINK I DO.

HATE TO INTERRUPT THE MOMENT...

BUT DO ANY OF THE OTHER HOUSES HAVE BASEMENTS?

NO. THEY DON'T.

SO...SHOULD WE TIE RANDY UP OR SOMETHING, SO HE DOESN'T BLOW UP OUR EXIT AGAIN?

NO OFFENSE, RANDY.

HEY! I'M SORRY THAT I DON'T WANT TO SEE THE LOVE OF MY LIFE IN DANGER!

THAT IS PATRONIZING BUT SWEET, HONEY. WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER.

YES, DEAR.

BINGO.

LOOKS LIKE IT GOES FOR QUITE A WAYS.

I ASSUME THE TUNNEL RUNS UNDER THE REST OF THE CITY AND THEN PIVOTS UPWARD TO THE SURFACE.

I'LL GO IN. SEE WHERE IT LEADS. WAIT HERE.

I HAVE TO SAY, DESPITE THE ABSURDITY OF THIS PLACE...IT'S A MARVEL OF DESIGN.

IT'S ALSO A GIANT TOMB AND I'LL BE HAPPY TO LEAVE. BUT...I APPRECIATE THE CRAFTSMANSHIP.

IT'S A FITTING TESTAMENT TO NATE'S GENIUS.

YOU SHOULD BE PROUD.

I AM. A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD HAVE DIED LIVED THANKS TO NATE.

YOU KNOW... I ALWAYS WARNED NATE ABOUT YOU.

WHEN YOU TWO WERE WORKING TOGETHER, I TOLD HIM YOU WERE ROTTEN TO THE CORE. BUT NATE WAS AN OPTIMIST.

DESPITE EVERYTHING, HE BELIEVED IN THE BEST IN PEOPLE.

EVEN YOU.

AND HERE I AM, THE SOON-TO-BE SAVIOR OF CHICAGO. YOU MUST BE SO ANNOYED THAT YOU WERE WRONG.

LILLY!

THUNK

I WASN'T WRONG.

TIE HIM UP, RANDY.

SHIRLEY!

IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU!

YOU TOO. HAPPY TO BE OUT OF HIDING. THOUGH I WISH IT WAS UNDER BETTER CIRCUMSTANCES...

JOAN CAUGHT ME UP. EDISON...WE'RE JUST MESSENGERS. DO YOU REALLY THINK WE CAN DO THIS?

HOPEFULLY YOU WON'T HAVE TO. BUT IF IT COMES TO IT...IT'S JUST A JOB. SIMPLE AS THAT. ONE BIG DELIVERY FOR A CLIENT WITH VERY DEEP POCKETS...

DAVIES INDUSTRIES. TELL THE OTHER MESSENGER COMPANIES.

THIS IS ON MY FAMILY'S TAB.

YOUR PARENTS WILL APPROVE IT?

THEY'RE ON A TRAIN OUT OF TOWN. THEY WON'T ***NOT*** APPROVE IT.

ANY WORD FROM YOUR GIRLFRIEND?

NOTHING YET FROM KAREN. SO HOPEFULLY THAT'S A GOOD SIGN.

EDISON...ALL OF THIS WILL ONLY ***SLOW*** THEM DOWN. WHAT DO WE DO IF WILLA DOESN'T SUCCEED?

SHE WILL. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER...

"...I KNOW SHE WILL."

ALL RIGHT, LET'S SEE WHAT'S AT THE END OF THE--

WHOA.

YOU'VE NEVER SEEN AN *AIRPLANE* BEFORE?

MOM! YOU SCARED ME. I THOUGHT YOU GUYS WERE WAITING FOR ME TO COME BACK.

WHAT CAN I SAY? I GOT ANTSY.

I FIGURED PLANES WOULD BE EVERYWHERE IN LOW GRAVITY.

THEY GOT BANNED EARLY ON. ACCORDING TO HISTORY CLASS--WHICH I GOT A'S IN, AND YOU CAN'T PROVE OTHERWISE--AT FIRST PILOTS COULDN'T ADAPT TO THE LOW GRAVITY AND KEPT JUST GOING UP INTO SPACE.

PFFF. AMATEURS.

AND THEN THE SKY DEBRIS GROUNDED EVERYONE ELSE.

SKY DEBRIS?

THERE'S A LOT OF STUFF IN THE AIR NOW, JUST FLOATING AROUND.

ALL IT TAKES IS ONE BIT OF SOMETHING FLOATING INTO AN ENGINE OR PROPELLER AND-- *BOOM!*

BYE BYE PLANE.

KLIK

OKAY. THAT'S A LITTLE MORE SCARY.

WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

AND WHY IS THE GROUND SUDDENLY RISING UP?

IT'S TIME FOR US TO GO.

BUT WHERE'S BARROW?

HE'S NOT COMING.

MOM. WHAT DID YOU DO?

HIT HIM OVER THE HEAD WHILE HE WASN'T LOOKING.

WOW. YOU REALLY *ARE* MY MOM.

LONG STORY. WE NEED TO GO BACK AND GET HIM.

NO.

BUT WE NEED HIM!

NO, WE DON'T.

YOU'VE BEEN ON THIS INCREDIBLE JOURNEY, AND YOU HAVEN'T FIGURED IT OUT YET, HAVE YOU?

YOU DON'T NEED A BIG RED BUTTON OR AN ARROGANT GENIUS WHO WILL BETRAY YOU THE FIRST CHANCE HE GETS.

YOU ARE ALL YOU NEED. ALL *WE* NEED.

MOM... I DON'T KNOW...

I DO.

CAN'T BE THAT HARD TO FLY ONE OF THESE OLD BIRDS.

"OLD BIRDS"?

MOM. I KNOW YOU'RE TRYING TO PROVE WE DON'T NEED BARROW, BUT GETTING US KILLED--

WILLA.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I DID FOR A LIVING BEFORE G-DAY, DO YOU?

I...

NO. I DON'T.

WELL, NOW YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF.

NO WAY.

WHOA! OKAY, YEAH, THIS IS A LITTLE TRICKY.

BUT GOD IT FEELS GOOD TO BE BACK IN THE AIR.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. NOW LET'S JUST HOPE...

"...WE'RE NOT TOO LATE."

END CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WE'RE ALMOST TO CHICAGO!

MOM, WE'RE GONNA MAKE IT! WE--

GAH! WHAT WAS THAT? PLEASE TELL ME IT WASN'T A FLOATING PUPPY!

IT WASN'T A--MOM, WHY WOULD YOU THINK THAT?

YOU SAID SKY DEBRIS COULD BE ANYTHING AND MY MIND GOES TO REALLY BAD PLACES WHEN I'M SCARED!

HEY, MINE TOO!

WE CAN GET OUT AND WALK, RIGHT? IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE IN A RUSH AND NEED TO STAY ON A PLANE THAT MIGHT EXPLODE?

YOU CAN DO THIS, MOM. TRUST ME...

"...EVERY SECOND IS GOING TO COUNT."

MOMMY, LOOK! BUTTERFLIES!

HERE WE GO.

YOU'RE STILL GOING TO PAY FOR THAT, RIGHT?

HOLY CRAP. KAREN WAS TELLING THE TRUTH.

UH, MR. MAYOR...YOU MIGHT WANT TO LOOK OUTSIDE.

DARLING...IS THIS A SHOW OF SOME KIND?

HELLO THERE. I'M RAYMOND HOFMEISTER, AIDE TO THE MAYOR. I HEAR YOU'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH HIM?

ONLY IF HE COMES TO ME.

I'M AFRAID THAT ISN'T POSSIBLE. YOU'RE WELCOME TO COME TO HIS OFFICE, THOUGH.

OF COURSE, YOUR...BUTTERFLY WON'T BE ABLE TO COME. WHAT WITH THE SIGNAL THAT DRIVES THEM CRAZY AND ALL.

CAN I TELL HIM WHAT ALL THIS IS ABOUT?

IT'S SIMPLE. YOUR TIME HAS PASSED.

NO LONGER WILL YOU FEED OFF OUR TOIL! NO LONGER WILL YOU ENSLAVE US!

MY NAME IS LUCAS SERRANO! I AM BUT ONE FARMER AMONGST MANY WHO HAVE COME FOR WHAT IS OURS. FOR WHAT WE DESERVE. WE HAVE COME FOR THE--

VRRRRRRRRR

RRRRRRRRRRRRR

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT? I'M MID-SPEECH AND--

LUCAS, LOOK OUT!

WHOOOM!

=SIGH= WE'RE HERE TO TAKE THE CITY.

I GATHERED, YEAH.

I...DON'T THINK...I CAN HOLD IT ANY LONGER...

THIS IS PERFECT, MOM! JUST GIVE US AN EYELINE, AND I'LL DO THE REST!

LET'S *GO!*

HEY GUYS! I MISS ANYTHING?

WILLA! YOU'RE HERE!

WAIT, WHY ***ARE*** YOU HERE? DOES THAT MEAN--

YEAH-- TURNS OUT THERE'S NO WAY TO FIX GRAVITY.

JOAN! SHIRLEY! I MISSED YOU GUYS!

OKAY. WE CAN ROLL WITH THIS. WE--

WAIT. DID YOU BRING BARROW BACK? HE COULD HELP!

NO. WE LEFT HIM TIED UP IN AN UNDERGROUND CITY.

BUT I DID FIND MY MOM!

YOU... WAIT, ***WHAT?***

HI.

LONG STORY. BUT DON'T WORRY--I HAVE AN IDEA. IT ALL DEPENDS ON ONE THING. DO YOU KNOW WHERE BARROW'S GENERATORS ARE?

I DO.

"GOOD. WE JUST NEED TO GET TO THEM...

"...BEFORE LUCAS' PEOPLE DO."

SERENA, STOP!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS.

IF I DON'T, EVERYONE I CARE ABOUT WILL DIE!

NO, THEY WON'T.

WE DON'T HAVE A HOME! THERE'S NOWHERE FOR US TO GO!

WE DON'T HAVE ANY ***CHOICE.***

BECAUSE LUCAS TOOK IT FROM YOU. WHEN HE BURNED DOWN THE FARM.

WHAT? NO--HE COULDN'T HAVE--

YOU KNOW I'M RIGHT. HE NEEDED THE FARMERS DESPERATE. THINKING THERE'S NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

HOW IS BEING FORCED TO FIGHT A WAR ANY BETTER THAN BEING FORCED TO FARM?

LISTEN, THE PEOPLE IN THE CITY ARE FAR FROM PERFECT. SOME ARE DOWNRIGHT TERRIBLE. BUT MOST OF THEM ARE JUST LIKE YOU.

"TRYING TO SURVIVE."

ANY MINUTE NOW...

"GIVE THEM A CHANCE."

JUST LIKE OLD TIMES.

"THIS IS YOUR CHOICE."

"*COMPLETE SURRENDER*"? THEY HAVE TO BE JOKING. THEY CAN'T EVEN GET ***INTO*** THE CITY WITH THOSE BUGS.

NO ONE'S MAKING IT FOR YOU. NOT BARROW, OR LUCAS. OR ME.

JUST YOU.

I...

I'M SORRY...

WELL DONE, SERENA.

OH GOD.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

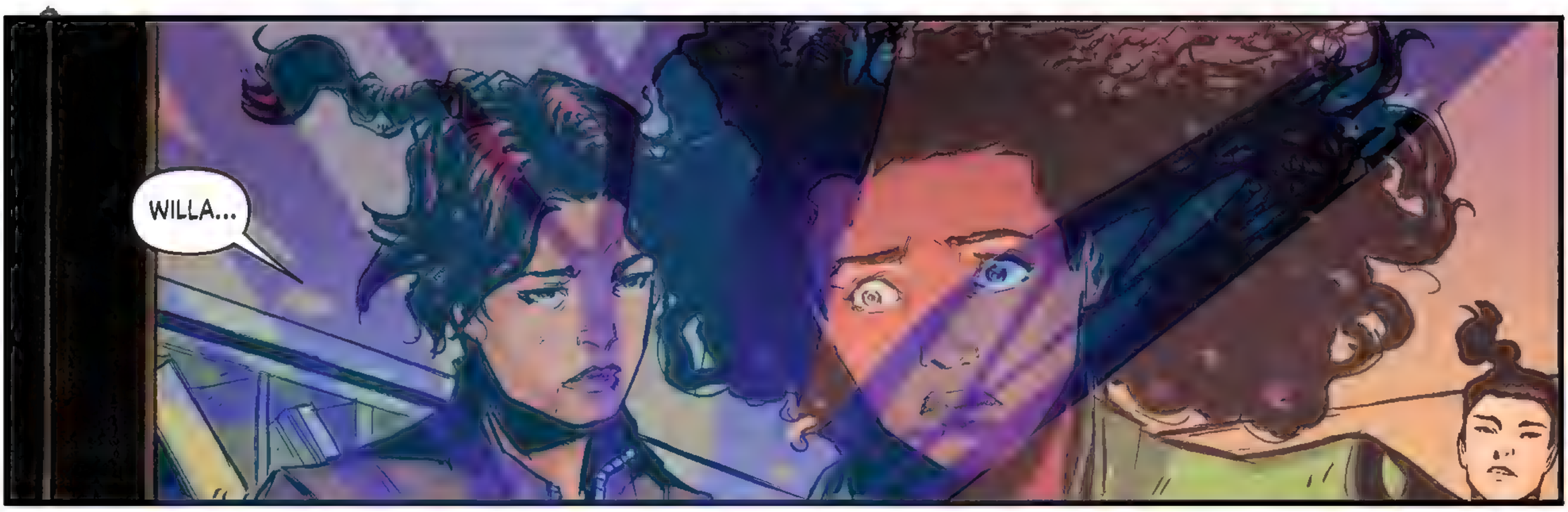
EVEN MY JETPACK'S NOT WORKING!

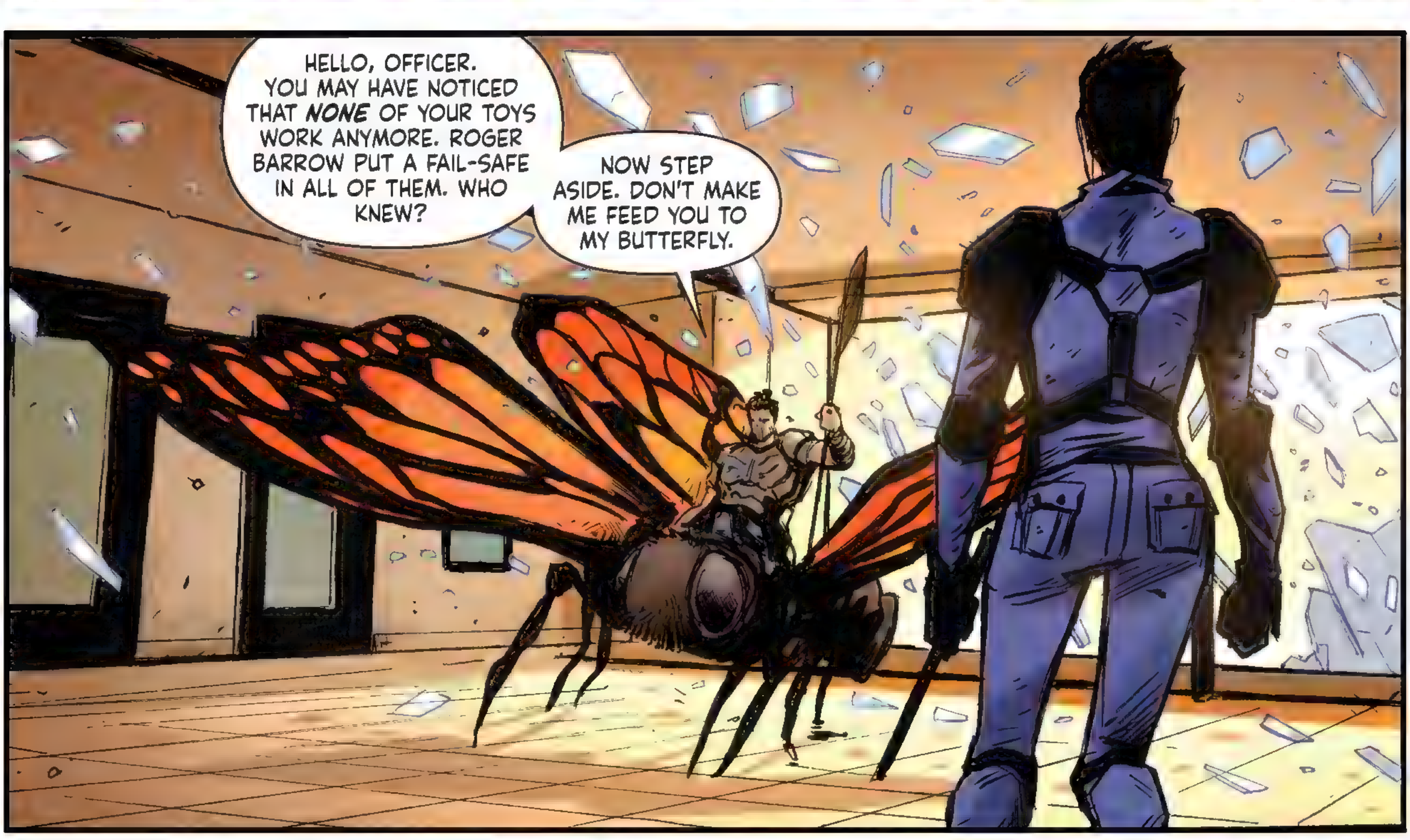
OSCARS

BRO

FARMERS! THIS IS OUR CHANCE!

TAKE THE CITY!


WILLA...


HELLO, OFFICER. YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT ***NONE*** OF YOUR TOYS WORK ANYMORE. ROGER BARROW PUT A FAIL-SAFE IN ALL OF THEM. WHO KNEW?
NOW STEP ASIDE. DON'T MAKE ME FEED YOU TO MY BUTTERFLY.

NOT YET...

WE KNEW.
YOU... DID?

ALL RIGHT, EVERYONE...

NOW!

FEELS GOOD TO BE BACK TO THE BASICS!

WHOA!

WELL, SORT OF BASICS.

HEY RICH DUDE, DON'T WORRY. YOU'RE SAFE.

WHAT... WHAT IS HAPPENING?

WE'RE SAVING YOU ALL. DUH.

BUT...WHAT ABOUT THE *BUGS?*

ONE STEP AT A TIME!

YOU'LL BE FINE SOON-- AAH!

FAN OUT! REMEMBER, OLD-SCHOOL TECH ONLY! PROTECT EVERYONE!

KAREN DID IT!

HOW DO YOU HAVE A GIRLFRIEND AND I HAVEN'T MET HER YET?

YOU HAVE NO ROOM TO CRITICIZE! YOU JUST SHOWED UP WITH A NOT-DEAD MOM!

FAIR.

WILLA, THERE IS ANOTHER PART TO THIS PLAN, RIGHT?

YEAH...

TRCCCK.

THEY'RE... SAVING THE PEOPLE.

BUT THAT'S JUST DELAYING THE INEVITABLE. UNLESS...THIS IS A TRAP.

BUT HOW? SERENA...

MADE A DEAL. FORGIVENESS FOR THE FARMERS IN EXCHANGE FOR GOING ALONG WITH THIS.

SHE KIND OF LEFT YOU OUT OF THE DEAL, THOUGH.

SERENA...

I'M SORRY, LUCAS. BUT YOU BURNED OUR HOME.

YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN ANY OF THEM.

I HAVEN'T YET BEGUN TO--!

TRCCCK.

OH NO--

TRCCCK!

LUCAS SERRANO, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST--

NEVER!

WATCH OUT, HE'S DANGEROUS!

NO! COME BACK! *FIGHT WITH ME!*

SAVE ANY FARMERS! GRAB ANYONE WHO'S FLOATING!

COME ON, THEY ATTACKED US!

ANYONE.

OKAY, OKAY! JEEZ.

OH GOD THANK YOU.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT WHOLE THING WORKED.

I CAN!

I'M PROUD OF YOU, BABY GIRL!

MOM, YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO STAY INSIDE!

AND NOT GET TO SEE YOU FLY AROUND LIKE A SUPERHERO?

GRRAAH!

I WOULDN'T MISS IT FOR THE--

STAY. AWAY. FROM. *HER.*

GLADLY. IT'S *YOU* I WANT. IF I'M GOING TO DIE, I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU WITH ME!

FWOOSH!

WHAT HAPPENED TO FIXING THE WORLD TOGETHER? I'M STARTING TO THINK THAT WAS JUST PILLOW TALK.

I WAS SO CLOSE! AND YOU RUINED IT! YOU RUINED *EVERYTHING!*

THERE IS NO FIXING THE WORLD, LUCAS. IT WAS BROKEN THEN, AND IT'S BROKEN NOW.

YOU JUST HAVE TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT.

WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO NEED SAVING.

BUT... YOU HAVE TO *FIGHT ME!*

NO, I DON'T.

HEY, KID. HAVEN'T YOU HEARD? MAG-SHOES ARE WORKING AGAIN! TURN YOURS ON!

I DON'T HAVE MAG-SHOES! I JUST WANTED TO SEE IF ANY OF THE BUGS WERE LEFT!

THEY WERE *SO COOL.*

I LIKE YOU.

WILLA! WE DID IT! WE WON!

YEAH. I GUESS WE DID.

SO... WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

WOW.

WAIT. YOU MEANT, LIKE, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT WITH THE WORLD, DIDN'T YOU?

YEAH. BUT HEY, FOR NOW...

END CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THIS IS A DISASTER!

AND IT'S ALL *YOUR* FAULT.

ME? ARE YOU SERIOUS, MR. MAYOR?

MAYBE YOU MISSED THE PART WHERE WE FLEW A BURNING PLANE THROUGH AN ***ARMY OF BUGS*** AND THEN SAVED YOUR BUTTS.

WHAT I ***DIDN'T*** MISS IS WHEN YOU STIRRED UP TROUBLE WITH A GROUP OF FARMERS AND BROUGHT WAR TO OUR DOORSTEP.

OR DO YOU WANT US TO APPLAUD YOU FOR CLEANING UP YOUR OWN MESS?

MY OWN MESS?!

OUR WORLD USED TO HAVE A STRUCTURE. AND YOU WENT AND UPENDED IT.

SO?

SO...WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF FOOD.

PEOPLE ARE GOING TO START STARVING IN THE CITY. BECAUSE A SELFISH GIRL WANTED TO HAVE HERSELF AN ADVENTURE.

OH, SO ***NOW*** YOU CARE ABOUT PEOPLE OF THE CITY.

DID THAT START BEFORE OR AFTER YOU ***RAN AWAY*** AND LEFT THEM ALL TO DIE?

HOW ***DARE*** YOU?! THAT WAS A PREARRANGED TRIP THAT I SIMPLY COULDN'T CANCEL--

I--I WILL NOT BE ADDRESSED IN THIS MANNER!

=SNORT=

I AGREE WITH THAT SNORT.

LADY, SAVE IT FOR SOMEONE WHO CARES. I'VE GONE SKYWARD AND COME BACK. I'VE FACED MAN-EATING BUGS AND ALMOST DIED LIKE, EIGHT TIMES? NINE?

YOU'RE JUST A RICH SNOB. YOU DON'T SCARE ME AT ALL.

ALSO, I'M DATING YOUR SON NOW.

DID YOU REALLY HAVE TO BRING THAT UP NOW?

WHAT? IT WAS GOING TO COME UP EVENTUALLY.

THAT WENT BETTER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD.

FOR ONE? I THOUGHT YOUR MOM WOULD HAVE KNIVES.

I'M TERRIFIED TO ASK HOW YOU THOUGHT IT'D GO.

JUST BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T SEE KNIVES DOESN'T MEAN THEY WEREN'T THERE.

MY MOM GOT TO YOU, DIDN'T SHE?

A LITTLE BIT.

THIS ISN'T YOUR FAULT.

TRUE. BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT SHE'S RIGHT.

WE NEED FOOD.

WE'LL TRY NEW YORK AGAIN--

THEY HAVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS.

THEN MAYBE L.A., OR--

NO. WE NEED THE FARMERS.

ONE TINY PROBLEM. THEY DON'T EVEN HAVE A ***FARM*** ANYMORE.

I KNOW...

WILLA FOWLER...

...THERE YOU ARE...

HEY MOM.

I...I DIDN'T HAVE ANY PICTURES OF YOU AS A BABY.

CAN I...?

OF *COURSE,* MOM. IT'S YOURS.

CHICAGO IS INCREDIBLE. HOW PEOPLE HAVE ADAPTED. HOW THEY'VE THRIVED. IT'S INSPIRING.

WILLA, I NEED TO GO BACK TO CRYSTAL SPRINGS. THEY NEED TO KNOW THAT THE OUTSIDE WORLD ISN'T AS TERRIFYING AS THEY THINK.

WILL YOU COME WITH ME?

WE JUST FOUND EACH OTHER AGAIN. I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE YOU.

I'M SORRY. I CAN'T, MOM. NOT YET. THERE'S SO MUCH I NEED TO DO...

I UNDERSTAND.

HEY. YOU SAID CRYSTAL SPRINGS HAS A BUNCH OF UNUSED LAND, RIGHT?

I DID. WHY?

MOM, I HAVE AN IDEA...

THIS FEELS LIKE A SPECTACULARLY BAD IDEA.

I KNOW, RIGHT? THOSE ARE THE ONES THAT USUALLY WORK OUT BEST FOR ME.

I SORT OF PROMISED MYSELF I WOULDN'T GO BACK INTO A FOREST DUE TO THE ALMOST BEING EATEN OF IT ALL.

AND YET HERE YOU ARE. I THINK I'M A BAD INFLUENCE ON YOU, EDISON DAVIES.

SERENA! WE KNOW YOU GUYS ARE HERE SOMEWHERE! PLEASE, COME OUT!

CAN WE YELL LESS LOUDLY IN THE FOREST FULL OF HUNGRY INSECTS?

COME ON, WHAT'S THE WORST...

...THAT CAN HAPPEN?

VEGGIE! WHICH I NAMED YOU IN MY HEAD WHILE I WAS AWAY! YOU'VE GOTTEN SO BIG!

YOU TWO SHOULDN'T BE HERE. IT'S DANGEROUS IN THE FOREST.

SAYS THE WOMAN LIVING IN IT.

WE DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE. I CAN'T IMAGINE THE CITY WOULD HAVE US. AND I DON'T BLAME THEM.

WE NEED TO GET THINGS BACK TO THE WAY THEY WERE.

BY HUNTING BUGS AND ALMOST DYING EVERY DAY?

WHAT ELSE COULD WE DO?

FARM.

ARE YOU INSANE? YOU DON'T JUST WANT TO TAKE IN OUTSIDERS, BUT ***MARAUDERS?***

THEY ATTACKED A CITY! AND YOU WANT TO GIVE THEM OUR LAND?

I DO.

RANDY, YOUR WIFE CAN'T ***INVITE*** THESE PEOPLE TO COME HERE! WILL YOU TALK SOME SENSE INTO HER?

OF COURSE.

LILLY, I KNOW YOU MEAN WELL, BUT THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN INVITE THE FARMERS HERE.

EXACTLY.

THE CITY COUNCIL IS FAR TOO STUPID AND STUBBORN TO ALLOW IT.

I--WAIT, WHAT?

YOU'RE ALL AFRAID. LIKE I WAS. BUT SEEING LILLY BE SO BRAVE REMINDED ME THAT WE FIRST BUILT THIS TOWN TO PROTECT PEOPLE.

NOT JUST THE ONES LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE HERE ON G-DAY.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU RAMBLING ABOUT?

WE DIDN'T JUST INVITE THE FARMERS. WE BROUGHT THEM WITH.

THEY'RE ALREADY HERE.

RANDY, YOU'RE THE ***MAYOR.*** OR AT LEAST YOU ***WERE*** UNTIL THIS STUNT. HOW COULD YOU?

THEY'RE PEOPLE IN NEED.

"HOW COULD WE NOT?"

"I'M PROUD OF THIS TOWN. OF ITS PEOPLE.

"WE'RE ***BETTER*** THAN WHAT WE'VE BEEN. HIDING UNDERGROUND LIKE RATS.

"WE SHOULD BE A BEACON TO PEOPLE.

"ALL SHOULD BE WELCOME IN CRYSTAL SPRINGS."

WELL, SAD NEWS: I'VE BEEN FORCED TO RESIGN FROM MY POSITION AS MAYOR.

WHICH I WAS EXPECTING. BUT IT STILL STINGS A BIT.

TELL. THEM. TO. STOP.

I WISH I COULD. BUT KIDS THESE DAYS...THEY DON'T LISTEN.

LUCKY FOR YOU, AS MY LAST DUTY AS MAYOR... I'M RELEASING YOU.

ABOUT DAMN TIME.

INTO THE CUSTODY OF SOMEONE WHO IS VERY EXCITED TO SEE YOU.

NO...

HELLO, ROGER BARROW. I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO HAVING ANOTHER CHAT WITH YOU.

KEEP HER AWAY FROM ME!

WHY?

BECAUSE I PSYCHOLOGICALLY TORTURED HER AND SHE CLEARLY WANTS REVENGE NOW, THAT'S WHY!

I'M NOT HERE TO TORTURE YOU.

AND WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME THEN? MONEY?

I'M HERE TO PUT YOU TO WORK.

EXCUSE ME?

WE'VE MADE A DEAL WITH THE FARMERS. THEY'RE GOING TO WORK OUR FARMLAND. GROW FOOD FOR ALL OF US HERE, AS WELL AS SELL IT TO CHICAGO.

YOU'RE GOING TO ***WORK*** FOR YOUR FREEDOM, ROGER BARROW. WITH US.

ONE TOMATO AT A TIME.

I KNOW WHAT YOU GUYS ARE DOING.

CLEANING UP YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S MESS?

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A SITUATION. GOBBLING UP BARROW'S COMPANIES LIKE YOU'RE AT A FREE BUFFET.

THAT'S ABSURD.

I WOULD NEVER EAT AT A BUFFET.

YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. THERE'S A POWER VACUUM. AND YOU'RE FILLING IT.

BETTER US THAN SOMEONE ELSE.

NOT SURE I AGREE, MOM.

THEN I SUPPOSE YOU ONLY HAVE ONE CHOICE.

YEAH, GET THE HELL OUT OF--

JOIN US.

BE PART OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS.

YEAH, I HAVE NO INTEREST IN THAT.

I KNOW YOU DON'T. AND I HAVE NO INTEREST IN HEARING YOU COMPLAIN ABOUT OUR PRACTICES ANYMORE.

SO EITHER JOIN US AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT, OR RUN AWAY LIKE ALWAYS.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE.

GOOD NEWS IS--THE FARMERS HAVE MOVED INTO CRYSTAL SPRINGS.

BAD NEWS-- WITH RANDY OUT AS MAYOR, IT SOUNDS LIKE A ROUGH TRANSITION.

DON'T LOOK DOWN!!

WE KNEW IT WOULD NEVER BE EASY.

ANYTHING WRONG? YOU LOOK LIKE SOMETHING'S BOTHERING YOU.

I-- NO. IT'S NOTHING.

WE'RE SUPER LATE. WE'RE GOING TO MISS IT!

THEY LITERALLY CAN'T START WITHOUT US.

IT'S TIME.

THEIR GUARD'S DROPPED. NOW I CAN GET MY REVENGE.

THAT'S GREAT, BUDDY. YAY REVENGE. GO GET 'EM.

THANK GOD THAT NUTSO'S GONE.

FINALLY I'LL--

WHAT THE HELL?!

GAH! WE CAUGHT ANOTHER HOMELESS DUDE.

SERIOUSLY? HOLD ON, I'LL LET HIM LOOSE--

WHOA! A *SWORD!*

YES, A SWORD! SO BACK OFF, OR--

GRAAA!

FZZT

AWESOME. I'VE ALWAYS WANTED A SWORD.

DUDE'S GOT SOME ARMOR ON TOO!

AVAST MATEY! *ARR!* I'M A PIRATE!

I WANT TO TRADE. THIS ARMOR STINKS.

SEE? I TOLD YOU THEY COULDN'T START WITHOUT US.

GREAT, WILLA'S HERE. SO CAN WE FINALLY DO WHATEVER THIS IS?

I HAVE A SPECIAL DELIVERY FOR JOAN NING. IS THAT YOU, MA'AM?

YOU KNOW IT'S ME, JERK FACE.

WHAT *IS* THIS?! WILL SOMEONE TELL ME--

OH.

KAREN MARIE FRANZEN, WILL YOU--

"IS THAT YOUR MOM'S TRAIN COMING IN?"

I THINK SO. I'M SO EXCITED TO SEE HER.

I KNOW IT'S ONLY BEEN A COUPLE MONTHS, BUT IT FEELS LIKE SO MUCH LONGER.

WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A TRIP TOGETHER.

TRAVEL A BIT.

WANNA COME?

WILLA... I ACCEPTED A JOB AT DAVIES INDUSTRIES.

YOU DID *WHAT?*

THIS CITY'S IN A BIG TIME OF CHANGE. AND I...WELL...

YOU NEED TO KEEP YOUR PARENTS FROM BEING TERRIBLE PEOPLE.

PRETTY MUCH.

THIS'LL BE BETTER ANYWAY. A ROAD TRIP, JUST YOU AND YOUR MOM.

I'D JUST BE IN THE WAY.

YOU'RE ALWAYS IN THE WAY. IT'S WHAT I LOVE ABOUT YOU.

YOU *DO*, DO YOU?

I DIDN'T MEAN TO SAY THAT.

IT SLIPPED OUT.

OH GOD, THIS IS EMBARRASSING.

WELL I LOVE YOU TOO, WILLA FOWLER.

GO SEE THE WORLD. JUST COME BACK TO ME. OKAY?

WHERE ARE YOU GUYS GOING TO GO FIRST?

I'M NOT SURE. DID YOU KNOW THERE USED TO BE SOMETHING CALLED AN *OCEAN*?

HA, YEAH. I DID.

I WONDER WHAT'S THERE NOW.

ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.

I KNOW. I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE IT.

"I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE IT ALL."

THE END

EPILOGUE

Mom and I found the ocean.

It's amazing and beautiful and insane and did I mention amazing?

Though it DID take a little bit for Mom to get used to it...

Okay, MAYBE me too...

We're having a great time.

I just wish you were here with us.

We made our way up the coast. Met some wonderful people.

There's so much good out in the world.

Also I ate snails! And they weren't terrible!

Don't worry, there's still plenty to be scared of too.

But at night... I always think about you.

I MISS you so much.

We spent a couple weeks in New York City. They'd heard all about Chicago. Apparently I'm sort of famous!

We're taking a ~~derigible~~ ~~derrigible~~ big balloon to England next.

I just want you to know, even if you're not with us... you're WITH us.

Every step of the way.

I miss you so much, Dad.

DAD
—x—

Love, Willa x

SKYWARD

supplemental

CBR INTERVIEW

Lucifer Showrunner Teams with Comics Vet to Defy Gravity in SKYWARD

Lucifer showrunner Joe Henderson and veteran artist Lee Garbett tell CBR about teaming for SKYWARD, a new Image series set in a gravity-reduced world.

BY ALBERT CHING • APR 18, 2018

New Image Comics series SKYWARD arrives with not only a unique high concept -- a world in which gravity has been greatly depleted, meaning much of normal life is conducting while floating in midair -- but also an unexpected creative team. Joe Henderson is a first-time comic book writer, and Lee Garbett is one of the more prolific superhero artists of the past decade, with credits including *Batgirl* and *Loki: Agent of Asgard*.

Yet it's their shared connection with a certain charming devil that helped make this pairing happen: Henderson, a TV writer who's worked on *White Collar, Almost Human* and more, is the current showrunner of Fox's *Lucifer*, based on the DC/Vertigo character. Garbett illustrated DC's recent *Lucifer* comic book series, which was launched to coincide with the success of the TV show. Though they have never actually worked together prior to SKYWARD, a social media connection between the two provided enough of a spark to make the freshly debuted creator-owned series a reality.

CBR spoke with both Henderson and Garbett about SKYWARD, which stars Willa Fowler, a young courier who has only known life in a gravity-deficient world, having been born after "G-day" -- the day the laws of physics changed. Henderson and Garbett spoke about the origins of their collaboration, building a world mostly sans gravity, their approach to bringing authenticity to diverse characters and the different types of stories they're looking to tell in the 15-issue run of SKYWARD.

CBR: Joe, Lee, I know that you both have a shared history with the character Lucifer, but I'm curious -- how did this pairing come about, specifically to make SKYWARD a reality?

Joe Henderson: It's funny, the tagline for the book is a bit odd: "From the writer and artist of *Lucifer*! Er, kind of. Because one's from the TV show, one's from the comic, and they've never worked together before." Super catchy, right?

I've been a longtime fan of Lee's since *Loki: Agent of Asgard*. On that book, he did exactly the kind of thing I needed for SKYWARD -- taking big, crazy ideas and imbuing them with humanity. We'd tweeted back and forth a little bit due to the *Lucifer* connection. So, when I went looking for an artist, I sent him a DM asking if he could recommend anyone. Secretly, I was hoping he'd want to do it. But come on. What were the chances?

Lee Garbett: Haha. Yeah, that was a pretty cool day. "The showrunner of TV's *Lucifer* has DM'd me!?!" As I read it I hoped the angle was that I'd be interested, too but I was equally aware Joe may have genuinely wanted me to recommend somebody else.

But tough! I'd read it first, fell in love instantly and refused to let anyone else near it. I'm not a believer in fate but this was as near as it gets. It struck such a chord with me. It couldn't have felt more natural a fit than if we'd collaborated on it from the outset.

CBR: Joe, this is your first comic book writing credit, but obviously you've spent time in the world as the showrunner of a DC-based TV show, and, of course, a comic book fan. Has writing comics always been a goal for you? What was the transition from TV to comics like?

Henderson: It has -- I'm a longtime reader and have a frighteningly encyclopedic knowledge of late '80s, early '90s Marvel comics. (Ask me anything about *Darkhawk*. I know everything. God help me). My current reading list is a pretty even mix of Marvel, DC and creator-owned.

Writing a comic has been a dream goal. So, when it finally happened, I didn't want to be one of those writers who comes in and thinks

he already knows how to write a comic. It's such a different medium, and the first thing I wanted to do is respect that. Mike Costa, who is on the Lucifer staff, really helped me learn the ropes early on. And I studied all the scripts I could find online to really learn the craft.

The biggest difference I found was that, in TV, I can write a scene without really knowing what it's going to look like. I know what the characters will do and say, but I like to leave the rest up to the director. With comics, you need to choose each moment within the panel, but still leave room for the artist to surprise you. I think it's really strengthened my writing in general to step outside my comfort zone a bit.

In either medium, the most important thing is the character you're going on the journey with. And I absolutely love Willa Fowler, our protagonist. She's the perfect character to take us through this low-G world -- fearless, infectiously buoyant, almost a reflection on the world itself. And that's mostly due to how Lee brings her to life in every panel.

CBR: Lee, this is your first creator-owned comic -- after many years in the work-for-hire realm, how has this experience been different for you?

Garbett: Yes, this is my first, full-on foray into the creator-owned world. I really enjoy the work-for-hire projects and getting to play with the characters I've grown up loving, and still love to this day, but I'd always wanted to get something out there that I had a stake in and that I could help build from the start. It just seemed a sensible move -- as long as it was the right project. A few opportunities have presented themselves along the way, but it was Joe and SKYWARD that really had me feeling confident enough to turn down some very cool work-for-hire offers and to jump in with both feet.

When it came to actually starting, I wasn't too worried. I'm pretty disciplined when it comes to schedule, so I knew I wouldn't need a day-to-day editor, chasing me down for pages. I knew I could structure the book as I would any work-for-hire gig and turn in work on a regular basis. That's proved to be the case, and I'm drawing issue #7 as issue #1 is about to come out, so we're in very good shape. There'll be no waiting on issues with this book.

CBR: The high concept of SKYWARD -- gravity (nearly) disappearing from Earth -- clearly propels the story. For as much as you can recall, how did this idea take shape? Was it something you've been kicking around for a while, waiting for the right medium to tell the story?

Henderson: When I was a kid, I used to stare up at the big, beautiful blue sky... and *freak out*. Our world has no ceiling! There's nothing protecting us from outer space! Why are we not terrified?! But I also loved picturing what it would be like to float through the air, grabbing onto trees and whatever else could propel me around. A little adventure mixed in with my irrational terror.

About six years ago, I decided to take these childhood fears and daydreams and turn them into a story. And I quickly realized it was such a visual idea, it was the perfect reason to finally make a comic book. But it was a long process of developing the characters, world building, and then finding the right partner in crime to bring it to life. And boy does Lee bring it to life.

CBR: From this perspective, it seems like a big part of the fun of a concept like SKYWARD is figuring out the "rules" as to how the lack of gravity would affect every part of life. Both story-wise and visually, how has that been to explore? And what's the ratio of consulting actual science versus "this is fun and works for the story"?

Henderson: That's always the balance, isn't it? I mean, we're starting off with a relative impossibility -- if gravity became a fraction of what it is today, chances are, we'd all just get sucked into space. So, the rules are already slightly out the window. But it can't *feel* like we've abandoned the rules. If it does, the world is arbitrary, and nothing matters. So, it's so important to feel a sense of consistency, and that every new thing we learn about the world builds on it.

With that in mind, what Lee and I found is that every element should be rooted in science, if not strictly adhering to it. So that meant a lot of research. Thank God for the

international space station videos -- those were invaluable to seeing what life without gravity could look like.

Garbett: Yes! That footage of astronauts making a PB&J sandwich was invaluable. Such an everyday activity suddenly presented as a task with many problems to be solved.

Nothing stays put. It really hit home just how much things would need to be thought out. We're not totally gravity-less in SKYWARD though, so, for visuals, I tended to think less of space and more about how things behave underwater, where things will be suspended for a time before drifting down to the ground, resting until disturbed again.

Henderson: As we figured out rules, so many questions led to new ideas and possibilities, "What does fighting look like in low-G? Rain? Sex?" Part of the fun of the book is unpeeling different aspects of the world every issue in surprising but also logical ways.

CBR: There are a lot of diverse characters in SKYWARD -- how did you approach the cast to make sure that the characters were being held with the right amount of authenticity?

Henderson: Working on *Lucifer* in particular has taught me so much about the importance of representation, and people seeing themselves in pop culture. We get so much feedback from people seeing themselves on the screen, be it as a Latina scientist, or a badass Black woman, etc.

I'm a white dude; I grew up reading comics where most heroes looked similar to me in some way. It was empowering and awesome! Everyone deserves to feel that way. It's important to me to always be trying to give someone that experience. I mean, hopefully people of all races and genders identify with Willa's journey. But in particular, I didn't see many young Black women on the shelves or on the screens, and I wanted to do my tiny part in addressing that.

When it comes to authenticity, I tried to make each characters' emotions and drives feel authentic so that we connect with them, no matter our background. To make each of them the hero of their own story.

CBR: The central premise presents a unique visual challenge -- superhero comic book readers are used to seeing characters flying, but this is something different. What did it take to truly "sell" the status quo of the world of SKYWARD?

Garbett: That is definitely something I had to watch for. As much as this new world allows people to fly among the skyscrapers, I couldn't have everyone adopting Superman poses or swinging around like Spidey. I couldn't get "super" with it. It had to be a sort of "new normality."

Even if people had air-jet packs etc., I wanted it to feel much more day-to-day and routine. It's just the way people get around now -- and, in treating it as an everyday event, it somehow looked more unusual.

For someone like Willa, a courier who has deliveries to make and can't afford fancy jet packs, she has to keep moving. If she stops for too long she'll drift down, so she operates more like a free runner. It's the ultimate parkour -- and it gives us a way of traversing the world we've not really seen too much before.

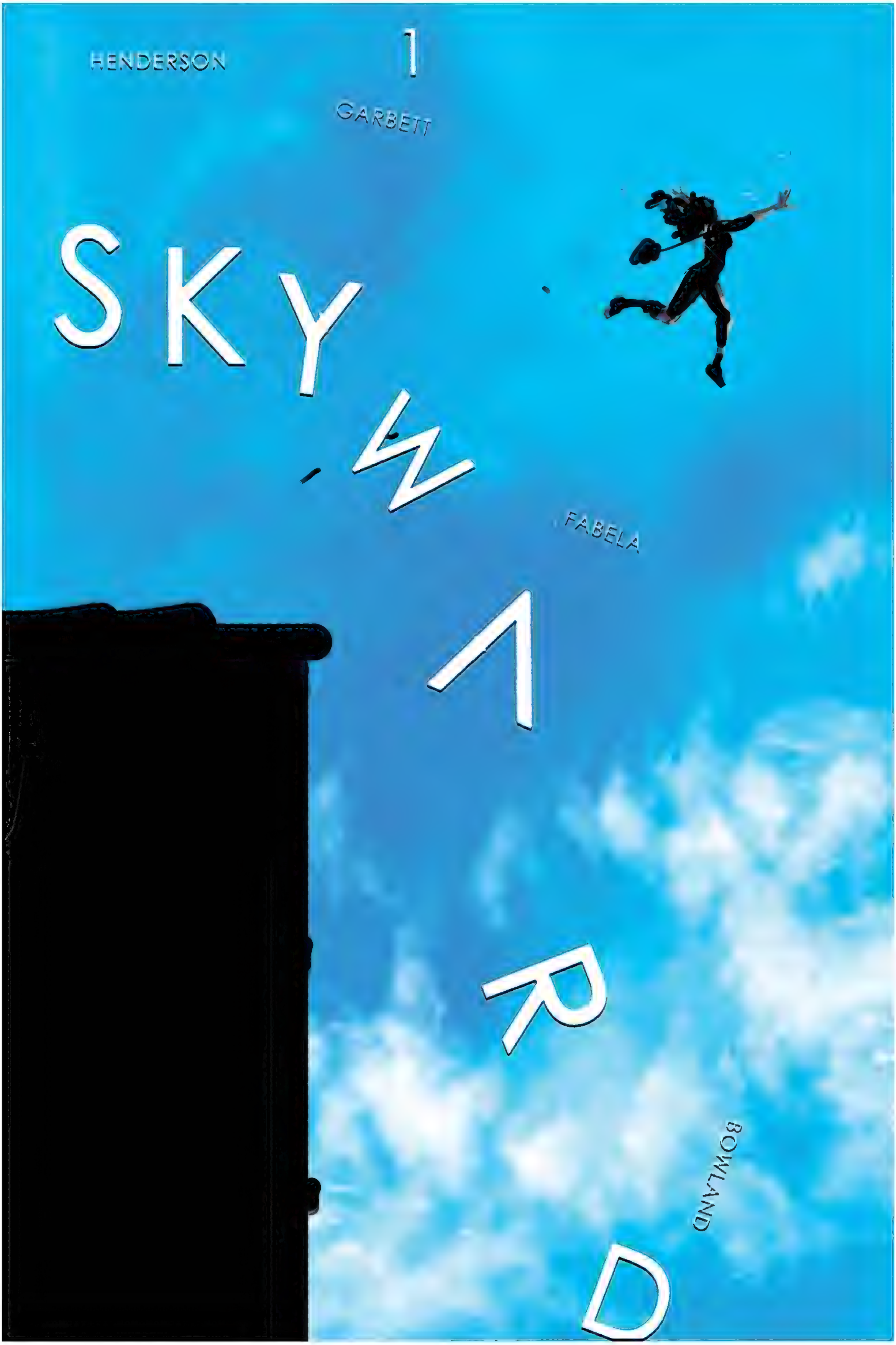
CBR: While the concept of SKYWARD may make it a de facto sci-fi series, what I've seen so far looks like the actual stories could encompass a number of genres. How much room for different types of storytelling do you see in SKYWARD?

Henderson: One of the things I love about this book is that we can tell all sorts of different tales. The first arc is very much a coming-of-age story, only in a world turned upside down. But the second arc is very different; much more action-packed and... well, batshit crazy. Some truly bizarre stuff is coming up in really fun ways.

SKYWARD will always feel like an adventure book, but the fun is shifting the tone between chapters. Sometimes darker, sometimes weirder, sometimes sillier. It's what I love about the world Lee and I get to play in -- there are so many toys to play with!

EMILY

Jock's concept for issue 1 second printing cover



Jock's issue 1 second printing cover

BARROW
AGRICULTURAL

ROCKET
MESSENGERS

PAGE 3:

PANEL 1: She's JERKED back as the Bug won't let go. The Dad still held in its clutches.

WILLA (CONT'D)
OOOF!

PANEL 2: The Dad stares at her, amazed. She PULLS at him, but the Dragonfly's got a strong hold.

DAD
Oh my God, thank you! I can't believe you --

WILLA
Don't thank me yet.

PANEL 3: The Dragonfly brings them both towards its face to eat. The Man looks terrified; Willa's reaching for her gun.

DAD
This can't be real this can't be happening --

PANEL 4: Close Up as the Dragonfly opens its insect maw, and Willa aims her GUN right down it:

WILLA
Close your eyes and hold on tight.

SFX: BLAM!

PAGE 4:

PANEL 1: Grossness FLOATS through the air where the dragonfly's head just to be. Make it disgusting without being too graphic, and embrace the zero-G ick of it. The Dad looks like he's going to be sick. Willa's just relieved. (Also, either their back should be against something, or the Bug's hold on the Dad's shirt is enough that they didn't go flying. Dealer's choice).

WILLA (CONT'D)
Okay, now --

PANEL 2: The Bug's HEADLESS BODY JERKS around violently, BASHING them against a tree. It should look like it HURTS.

WILLA (CONT'D)
UNGH!

PANEL 3: Willa aims the gun at the mandible holding the DAD, PULLING THE TRIGGER.

WILLA (CONT'D)
Come on! You don't have a head!!
That's not fair!

SFX: BAM!

PANEL 4: Willa and the Dad go flying into another tree, COLLIDING with it, half of the mandible (or whatever's holding the Dad) still attached to him.

PANEL 5: Willa looks at the Dad.

WILLA (CONT'D)
Okay. Well at least we're...

PANEL 6: Bugs all TURN their heads, having heard the commotion. Willa sees it.

WILLA (CONT'D)
...Screwed.

PAGE 5:

PANEL 1: Willa SHOVES the man deep into the foliage of the tree. Willa has a fiery intensity to her. The Dad is listening like a school kid getting lectured.

WILLA (CONT'D)
Stay here. Don't move.

DAD
But --

WILLA
You are NOT leaving your daughter alone. You are NOT. Understood?

DAD
Yes ma'am.

PANEL 2: Willa DARTS away, waving her arms as the Bugs follow.

WILLA
Hey bugs! Follow me! I'm delicious!

PANEL 3: Willa grabs her extinguisher, uses it to propel herself in front of the bugs. Willa, telling herself to make herself feel better:

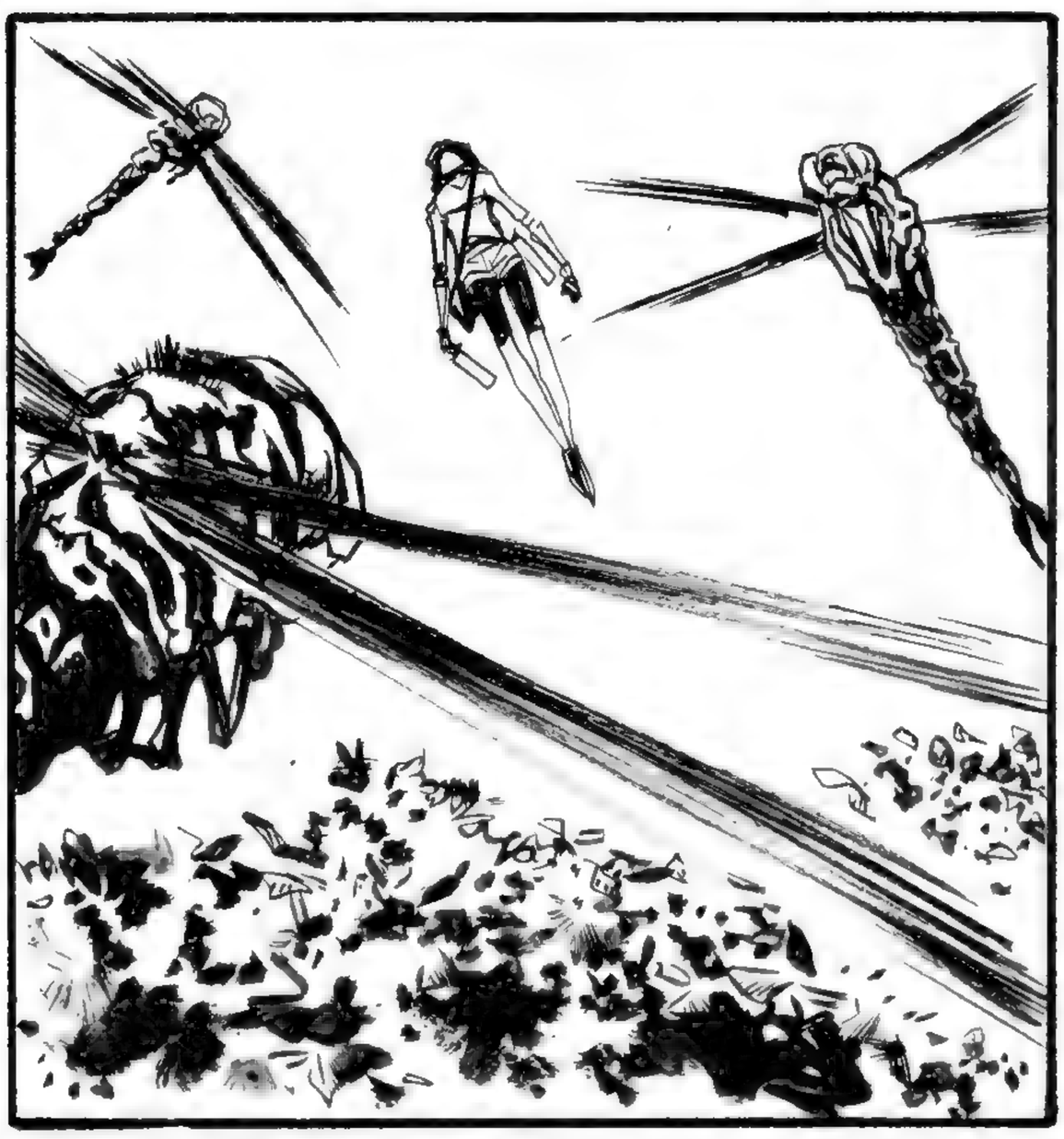
WILLA (CONT'D)
Relax. Those aren't impossibly gigantic bugs.
(another balloon)
You're back in high school. It's dance class. That's all this is.

PANEL 4: Willa shoots herself up, barely dodging a BUG.

WILLA (CONT'D)
Just a dance.

PANEL 5: Willa shoots herself down, dodging another (or its mandibles).

WILLA (CONT'D)
Oh yeah. I'm a terrible dancer.



PAGE 6:

PANEL 1: A BUG's close to her. She gives it a face full of EXTINGUISHERS.

BUG
SKKKKRK!

PANEL 2: Another bug GRABS her leg. She struggles, pulling the extinguisher off her back.

WILLA
GAH!

PANEL 3: Willa JAMS her extinguisher in its mouth.

WILLA (CONT'D)
Eat THIS!

PANEL 4: It EXPLODES, freeing Willa and blowing up the bug's face. Willa goes flying.

BOOM

PAGE 7:

PANEL 1: Willa HITS the ground, skidding across it. Her gun's already out, held above her as BUGS approach. She's barely keeping it together. She's LOSING this fight.

PANEL 2: The bug's MOUTH is almost on her as Willa pulls the trigger:

SFX: CLICK

PANEL 3: Willa PANICKS as a bug is inches away from eating her, still pulling away at the trigger. The Bug's MOUTH starts to cover her feet. She's DEAD. SHE'S DEAD.

WILLA
Come on come on come on --

SFX: CLICK CLICK CLICK

PANEL 4: Willa hasn't moved, but the Bug's entire head floats PAST her. We see that the head's been severed directly from the neck. Bug gore floats around it. Willa looks completely bewildered.

PANEL 5: Willa's POV -- a silhouetted figure stands over her. Her hero. Willa stares:

WILLA (CONT'D)
Edison... ?

CLICK CLICK

CLICK

PAGE 8:

PANEL 1: Hero shot! This is LUCAS SERRANO (Hispanic). He's handsome in a rugged way. And he's holding A SWORD. Basically, think how to make him look as different from Edison but feel like a proper rival. Whereas Edison is slight, this dude should be beefcake and bearded. A MAN who has had to survive.

LUCAS
Hi.

PANEL 2: Willa stares up at him. She's immediately besotted.

WILLA
You saved my life.
(another balloon)
You have a sword.

PANEL 3: Lucas looks amused. Willa's in shock.

LUCAS
I do.

WILLA
That's an actual sword.

LUCAS
Yes. Yes it is.

WILLA
Giant bugs and swords. Sure. Okay.

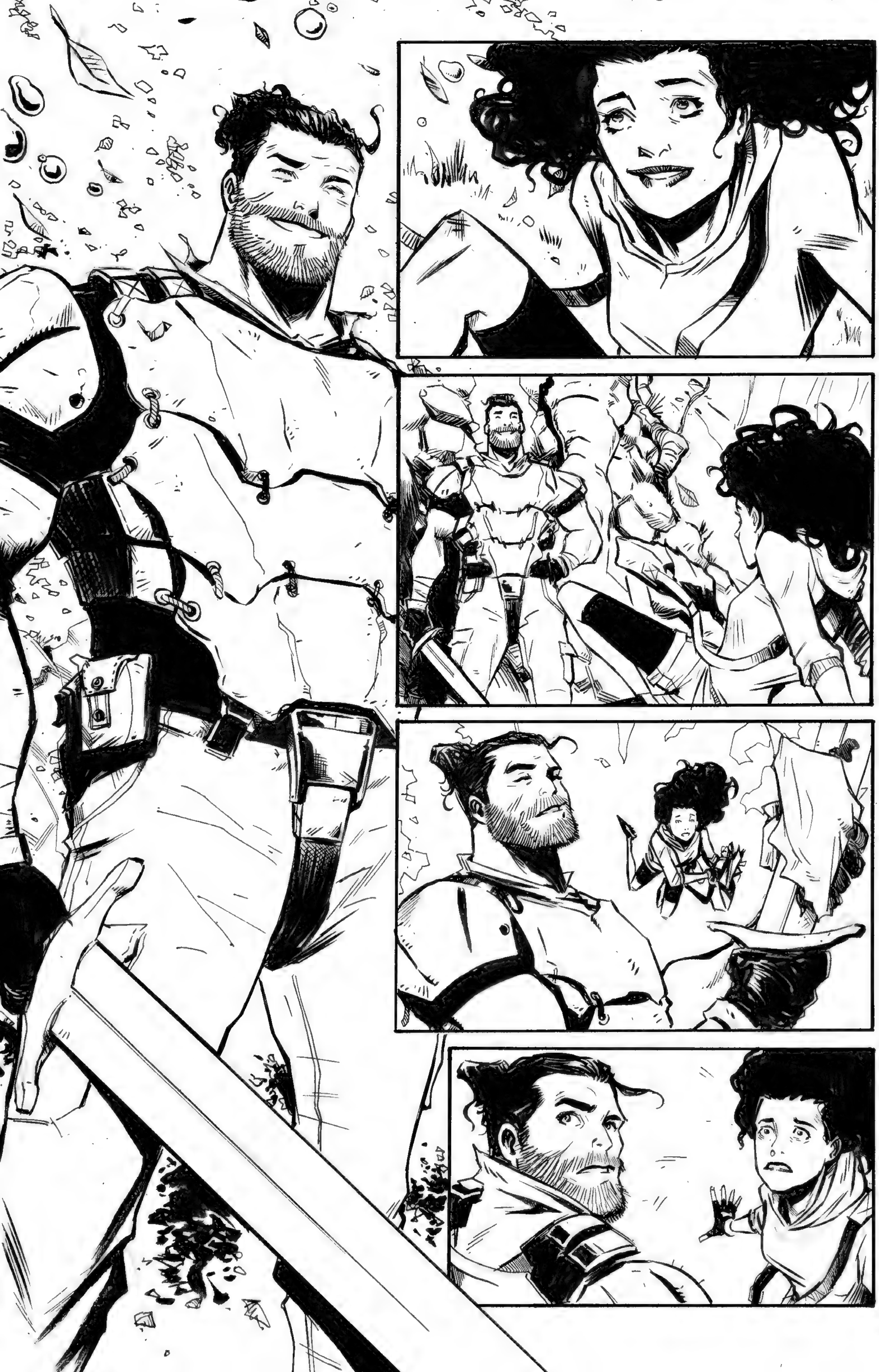
PANEL 4: Lucas wipes bug gore off the sword.

LUCAS
The key is to sever the spinal cord. Otherwise the body still kicks for a bit.

WILLA
(still processing)
I'll remember that the next time.

PANEL 5: Willa looks over his shoulder. He turns to see what she sees:

WILLA (CONT'D)
Oh no.



PAGE 9:

PANEL 1: It's a GIANT BUTTERFLY. It looms over them, beautiful but terrifying. She GRABS him.

WILLA (CONT'D)
Quick, come on --

PANEL 2: Lucas stops her. Not worried at all.

LUCAS
Relax. She's with me.

WILLA
Wait, that's YOUR butterfly?
(another balloon)
Is a sentence I didn't think I'd be saying today.

PANEL 3: Lucas floats up to its back. We see: There's a SADDLE back there, as well as a contraption to hang MEAT in front of the butterfly's face.

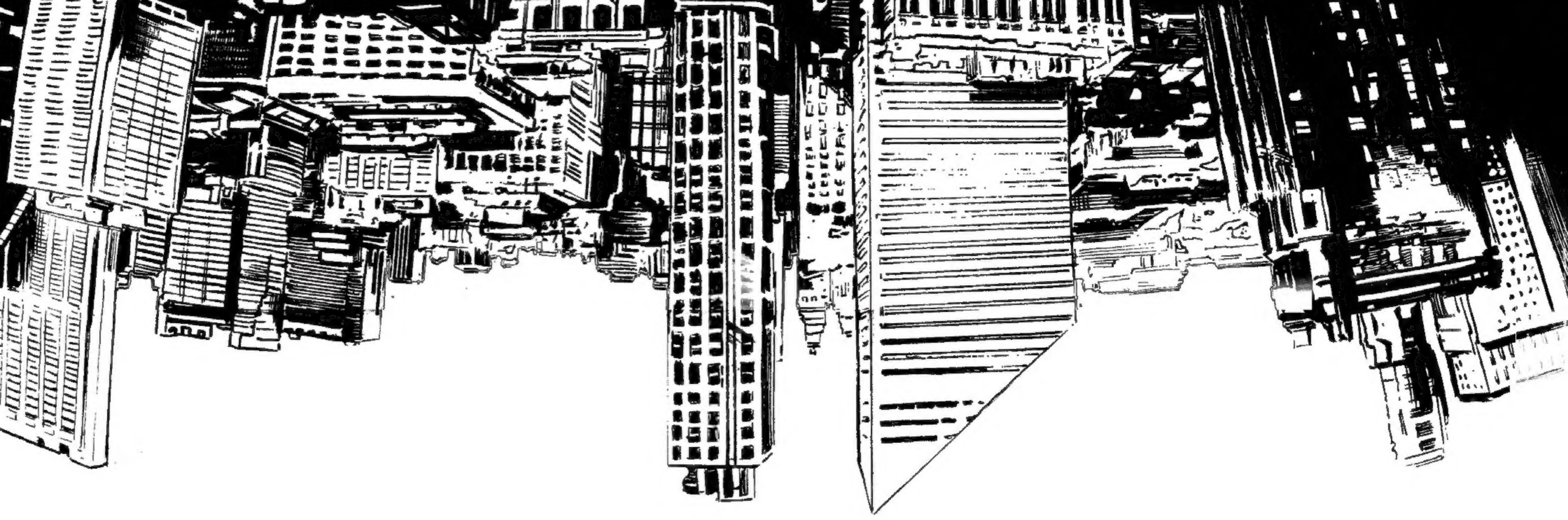
LUCAS
Don't get me wrong, she'll tear your arms off and eat them if she gets the chance.
(another balloon)
So don't give her the chance.

PANEL 4: He holds out a hand.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Need a lift?

PANEL 5: off Willa, holy crap, taking his hand --

ALSO FROM TEAM SKYWARD



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One day, gravity on Earth suddenly became a fraction of what it is now. Twenty years later, humanity has adapted to its new low-gravity reality. And to Willa Fowler, a woman born just after G-day, it's...well, it's pretty awesome, actually. You can fly through the air! I mean, sure, you can also die if you jump too high. So you just don't jump too high. And maybe don't get mixed up in your Dad's secret plan to bring gravity back, which could get you killed...

SKYWARD HC collects all 15 issues of the Eisner Award-nominated series from writer **Joe Henderson** (showrunner of NETFLIX's *Lucifer*) and artist **Lee Garbett** (*Captain Marvel: Last Avenger, Loki: Agent of Asgard*). It also features a BRAND-NEW EPILOGUE with all-new art and story!

"SKYWARD is a great new series with a great hook and jaw-dropping artwork by Lee Garbett. Highly recommended!"
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"SKYWARD reminds me a lot of *Y: The Last Man*. The book has such a simple and elegant premise that it's enough to hook the average reader and totally infuriate fellow storytellers."
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"Fun, clever, beautiful stuff."
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"I loved SKYWARD! It has the best kind of high concept — the sort of thing you can't wait to see explored over a good, long run. Onward and upward!"
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